

EXERCISES.

IN TWO PARTS.

- I. The Christian's Employment before,
at, and after the LORD'S-SUPPER.
- II. The Christian's Conduct in his After-
life.
-

By *JABEZ EARLE*, D.D.

THE FIFTH EDITION.



G. Pamph. 2045 (3)

L O N D O N :

Printed for JOHN WARD, in Cornhill.
MDCCLIV.

SACRAMENTAL
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TO THE READER.

IT is sad to consider, how many professed christians live in the utter neglect of the Lord's-supper; and how few communicants are careful to prepare duly, eat and drink worthily, and live answerably.

A great deal has been written upon this occasion: to which I have added the following sheets; which I may be allowed, I hope, to publish, without being thought to pretend to any thing extraordinary, or detract from the excellent performances of others.

For, while the case requires and admits help, there can be no harm in making further trials; especially in those circumstances, where the most likely means are not ever the most effectual. But success more especially depends upon the divine blessings which is not always given in regular proportion to the natural aptitude of the means; but sometimes in a sove-

TO the READER.

reign and unaccountable manner, that no flesh should glory in his presence.

However, it is too plain to be denied: that the different capacities and relishes of men make a variety useful, if not necessary; and that there may be a concurrence of many other circumstances, which shall give a meaner performance the advantage with some people as to usefulness, above others that are more sprightly and elaborate. Nay, it is no impossible thing, that a man may read a book upon some foreign consideration; which shall be blessed to do him that good, which could never be expected from better discourses not known of, or not minded.

Upon these accounts I have published the ensuing papers; hoping they may be useful to some, whatever their general entertainment be.

THE

P A R T I.

T H E

Christian's Employment

Before, at, and after the

LORD'S-SUPPER.

C H A P. I.

*The christian convinced, that it is his Duty
to come to the Lord's-Table.*

DO this in remembrance of me^a! It is the voice of my Lord; and lest I should think it was directed only to his twelve disciples, or the *christians* of the first ages, St. Paul assures me, that this ordinance is to run parallel with time, and by it the church is to *shew forth* Christ's death 'till he come. Consider, O my soul! Is the Lord at hand? will he surely come quickly? how shall I answer it in that day, that I have neglected so express a command?

B

a com-

a command not couch'd in ambiguous and uncertain terms; but deliver'd in as plain and positive expressions, as any in the bible. *Sure I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man!* I have profess'd a mighty respect to the authority of my redeemer, and a vast reverence for his laws; but how unaccountably have I managed! as tho' I were to chuse, what commands I would please to obey; and were vested with a dispensing power, superior to the obligation of *his* precepts, to whom *all power is given both in heaven and in earth*^b.

Blush, O my soul, and be ashamed at so inconsistent a conduct! either Christ is thy prince and law-giver, or he is not. *If not*, profess thyself an infidel, and renounce thy baptism. *If he be*, obey him in all that he requires: and either believe that he has not made it thy duty to remember him; or yield a chearful subjection in *this*, as well as *other* instances.

When he has said, *do this*; either he does not mean what he says, or does not speak to thee: or else thy disobedience is at once inexcusable and unaccountable.

Can the words be wrested? is any *sophistry* capable of contesting their sense? what can *do this*, signify less than a positive command? or, how can the will of my prince be ever signified, so as to oblige me, if so plain terms are by any cavil to be eluded?

But

^b Matt. xxviii. 18.

But does he speak to me? if I were a true disciple, I were indeed within the compass of the law; and must be either a *communicant* or a *rebel*.

Consider, O my soul! and don't rashly dash thy hopes, to escape thy duty. 'Tis true, I am not such a christian as I should be: but am I willing to have my name missing in the book of life? can I be content to resign my birth-right, and own that I have *neither lot nor portion* in the Son of God? would I be passed by, when the *Lord shall count and write up the people*? either I am a christian, or I am not: if I am, *this commandment is for me*: if I am not, what am I? a child of wrath, and a subject of the devil: and is such a condition tolerable? let me give up my self to Christ immediately: make no tarrying, O my soul, lest the avenger of blood overtake thee, and lest, if thou trifle *to-day*, thou be lost *to-morrow*. If I have been but *almost persuaded to be a christian* hitherto; it is high time that I make an absolute, unreserved surrender of my self to Christ presently, without any farther delay: and then let what I have done here *in secret*, be publickly own'd and avouch'd at the *Lord's table*.

' And now, Lord, *all my desire is before thee*: I am convinced of my duty, and dare no longer disobey. Oh! forgive

B 2

' me,

‘ me, that I have rebell’d so long! I have
 ‘ been *invited* to thy table, and foolishly neg-
 ‘ lected many an opportunity of strengthen-
 ‘ ing and refreshing my soul. I have been
 ‘ *commanded* to attend in remembrance of
 ‘ *him*, who deserves never to be forgotten;
 ‘ and by my neglect have at once pour’d
 ‘ contempt upon *thy* authority, and slighted
 ‘ *his* love, who *loved me, and gave himself*
 ‘ *for me.*

‘ I bless thee, that I am in some mea-
 ‘ sure sensible of my error; and am come to
 ‘ a resolution, that I will have respect to *this*,
 ‘ as well as *other* commands. The time past
 ‘ shall suffice me to have lived in the omis-
 ‘ sion of so plain a *duty*, and the neglect
 ‘ of so glorious a *privilege*: oh! *keep it upon*
 ‘ *the imagination of my heart for ever*; and
 ‘ let me be confirm’d in those good pur-
 ‘ poses, which thy own spirit has led me to
 ‘ form, and no less power than his can
 ‘ help me to keep.

‘ I am indeed *unworthy*; but acknow-
 ‘ ledge the insufficiency of that plea, against
 ‘ a *positive* command. I am *unworthy*, but
 ‘ must not therefore refuse thy kindness; I
 ‘ hope I am in Christ, tho’ the meanest
 ‘ soul that relates to him, and therefore
 ‘ cannot any longer want an ordinance;
 ‘ in the use of which, I hope *to grow in*
 ‘ *grace, and in the knowledge of my Lord.*

‘ Or,

‘ Or, if I have hitherto deceived my self,
 ‘ and *walked in a vain shew*, I now desire to
 ‘ accept of the gospel-offer, to own my bap-
 ‘ tismal covenant, to avouch thee, O Fa-
 ‘ ther, Son and Spirit, to be my God, my
 ‘ all, my everlasting portion. Upon my
 ‘ bended knees I now accept an offered Sa-
 ‘ viour; and call heaven and earth to witness,
 ‘ that, as far as I can judge, I am sincere.
 ‘ And this I would declare in the presence
 ‘ of thy people; begging with some hope
 ‘ and confidence, that I may be accepted
 ‘ *now*, and found in the number of the
 ‘ faithful *at last*.

‘ O direct me in all the steps I am to
 ‘ take; and let me see my way, and follow
 ‘ it, and have comfort in the issue, thro’
 ‘ the merits and mediation of my Lord and
 ‘ Saviour, Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

C H A P. II.

*The christian resolv'd to offer himself to the
 communion.*

NOW, O my soul, thou hast *opened thy
 mouth to the Lord*, and canst not go
 back! Thy next duty is to apply thy self to
 the *minister*, who is the *steward of these my-*
steries^d; that, if he judge thee *meet*, he may

B 3

admit

admit thee to the holy solemnity. Let me not be foolishly *bashful*, much less act the *hypocrite*; but use the utmost frankness with my spiritual guide: that he may be able to pass the better judgment upon my case, let me state it *fairly*; neither pretend to what I have not received, nor deny what I have. *This* would be base ingratitude; *that* impious mockery. If thou hast a prudent faithful minister to apply thy self to; freely open thy breast, and unbosom thy soul: tell him thy desires, and their motives; confess thy fears, doubts, and jealousies; beg his prayers; and reverence his judgment. If he should think thee *unfit*, be not provoked nor discouraged; but take his counsel, and wait with patience till he judge thee sufficiently instructed and duly qualified. If he express his *satisfaction*, don't distrust him; but believe him a more capable judge of thy case, than thou art thy self. Not that thou shouldst esteem him *infallible*; 'tis his *master's* province to search hearts: but sure *his* judgment deserves the same regard, as a *physician's* about thy body, or a *lawyer's* concerning thy estate. Be faithful in the account of thy self; and doubt not, but he'll be faithful in delivering his opinion. And with his faithfulness thou may'st expect tenderness, condescension and compassion, in imitation of the *chief Shepherd*, who is *meek and lowly in heart*;

*heart^c; who will not quench the smoking flax,
nor break the bruised reed^f.*

‘ Oh that God, who has convinced me of
‘ my duty, and brought me to a resolution,
‘ would help me to be open and sincere !
‘ Let me not go about to impose upon thy
‘ minister; which would be justly interpret-
‘ ed as an attempt to impose upon my
‘ Lord himself, *whose eyes are as a flame of*
‘ *fire*; who can’t be *deceived*, as *knowing*
‘ *what is in man*; and will not be *mock’d*,
‘ as being a *jealous God*. O give me *freedom*,
‘ that I may utter what I have felt; give
‘ me *humility*, that I mayn’t be ashamed to
‘ discover those follies and imperfections,
‘ that may be at the bottom of my doubts
‘ and scruples: give me a *teachable disposition*,
‘ that I may not despise instruction: help
‘ me to remember the relation, in which
‘ these under-shepherds stand to the *great*
‘ *shepherd and bishop of souls^g*.

‘ Let me not *despise* his judgment of my
‘ case, nor yet lay *too great a stress* upon it;
‘ remembring that ministers may accept,
‘ where God may reject; and admit those
‘ to the sacrament, as qualified for commu-
‘ nion with the church, who yet shall be
‘ found unworthy receivers, as not having a
‘ *wedding garment*.

‘ Oh direct thy servant, that he may
‘ deal *prudently and tenderly*, and yet withal,

B 4

‘ *faith-*

* *faithfully.* Let him be duly apprized of my
 * case, and pass such a verdict as the great
 * judge will ratify.

C H A P. III.

After having been approved by the minister, and allow'd to communicate.

BE thankful, O my soul, that G O D has heard the voice of thy supplication ! His *minister* has dealt tenderly and faithfully with thee, has encouraged thy design, promised the assistance of his prayers, given thee instruction, and suitable advice; and nothing more remains, but thy *actual preparation* for that holy ordinance.

But, O see to it, that thy heart be *right*. 'Tis a *deceitful* heart thou hast to manage : look to thy self, that thy *goodness* be not *as the morning cloud, and early dew, that soon passeth away*. Remember the warning the minister gave thee, that thou shouldest not act in such a case without serious thought, and mature deliberation, lest *rash* engagements should issue in *broken* vows, and *curst* apostacy.

Take heed, O my soul, that I be not another instance, to confirm the truth of that awful observation; (of which he *told me weeping*) that many *hot* professors have dwindled

dwindled into *luke-warm* christians, and sometimes fell headlong into the *gulf* of profaneness and infidelity. Tremble to think, if this should be thy sad case; and let thy fear quicken thy application, that thou mayst not *end in the flesh*, after having *begun in the spirit*.

Yet let me not be discouraged. 'Tis indeed a great thing to be a christian: but great is the grace and mercy of God; great is the merit, and prevalent the intercession of my redeemer, who has prayed for his disciples, that their *faith fail not*^h; great is the power of the Holy Ghost, who can preserve my graces, subdue my corruptions, help me to crucify the world, and resist and vanquish the devil. Never forget the encouragement he gave me to hope, that if my heart don't reproach me, as acting deceitfully in my professions and engagements; and if I will keep close to God in the way of his appointments, I need not fear being accepted of him now, and having the good work begun, *carry'd on to the day of Jesus*.

But, O my soul, see to it; and again, I say, see to it, that thou do *with full purpose of heart cleave to the Lord*: that thy present devotion don't prove a sudden flash; but having set *thy hand to the plough*, don't think of looking back. Remember that awful text,

B 5

It

^h Luke xxii. 32.

*It had been better for them, not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment*¹. Let this word be a spur to thy diligence; but not revive thy scruples. It were better never to communicate, than afterwards to apostatize.

But will this be a plea for thy disobedience? — Consider, O my soul, at this rate, thou shouldst never have been baptized; never call'd thy self a christian; never join'd thy self to a worshipping assembly; never heard a sermon, or put up a prayer; never given an alms, or perform'd a duty of any sort; seeing all these will aggravate thy misery, if thou prove a hypocrite or apostate at last.

Therefore, in the strength of Christ, hold on thy way: don't decline thy *Lord's table*, but prepare for it; that, being a worthy communicant here, thou mayst at last be a *partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light*.

Attempt all this in a better strength than thy own; ever remembering, that of thy self thou canst do nothing; and that God's grace is at once necessary and sufficient for thee.

• Now, O my God, I adore and praise
• thee, that I have been enabled to open
• my case to thy minister; and that thou
• hast inclined his heart kindly to *encourage*
• me, wisely to *instruct* me, and faithfully

• to

' to *warn* me; O may thy good spirit make
 ' his endeavours effectual, that I may re-
 ' ceive instruction and take warning. I
 ' am sensible of the treachery and baseness
 ' of my own heart; but I am also acquainted
 ' with thy power, and mercy, and faithful-
 ' ness. Oh! let me not rashly take up a
 ' profession, which I shall as hastily abandon,
 ' or never live up to.

' Help me to understand the engage-
 ' ments I am going under, that I may
 ' count the cost, and not prove a foolish
 ' builder: help me to consider the difficulties
 ' and disadvantages that attend religion,
 ' and the troubles it may expose me to:
 ' may I seriously consider, that I must
 ' *deny my self*, and *take up my cross*, and *follow*
 ' *Christ*, if I would be *his disciple*.

' Yet let none of these things *move* me
 ' from my resolution. O give me such near
 ' and affecting views of *the glory that is to be*
 ' *revealed*, and of that *wrath and fiery indig-*
 ' *nation* which awaits the ungodly: *so* set
 ' death and judgment before me, as to im-
 ' press me with a sense of the worth of my
 ' soul, and the emptiness of this world;
 ' that I may be fully determin'd to accept of
 ' Christ, and adhere to him with all his
 ' disadvantages; that I may *count all things*
 ' *but loss*, for the excellency of the knowledge of
 ' *him*.^k! And O may this be my unalterable
 ' persua-

' persuasion! Let me never turn aside, nor
 ' go a whoring from thee. Oh! let me
 ' not wander from thy commandments! let
 ' me never, like an ungracious prodigal,
 ' forsake my father's house, or count his
 ' *meat contemptible*. O never let me deny or
 ' forget that Jesus, whom I am so solemnly
 ' to remember and avouch for my Lord
 ' and my G O D. Let the unclean devil
 ' never re-enter, and take possession of this
 ' soul, which I consecrate as a *temple to the*
 ' *Holy Ghost*. I am full of fears, and have rea-
 ' son to be jealous of my self, but yet I am not
 ' void of hope; nor have I any reason to
 ' distrust my G O D: thy grace is sufficient
 ' for me; O for *thy name's sake, lead me and*
 ' *guide me; put thy fear into my heart, that I*
 ' *may never depart from thee.*

' Lord, let not the deceitfulness of my
 ' own heart, the incumbrances of the world,
 ' or the solicitations of the devil, put me by
 ' the design I have form'd of attending at
 ' thy table: may a sense of duty out-weigh
 ' a thousand excuses; and hopes of gracious
 ' assistance, and merciful acceptance, silence
 ' all my fears.

' Yet let me not come *unworthily!* may
 ' I never *eat and drink judgment to my self!*
 ' Deliver me from the dreadful guilt of *cru-*
 ' *cifying afresh, and putting to open shame,* that
 ' Jesus, whom I think my soul loves, and
 ' I desire to remember, avouch and honour:
 ' keep

‘ keep me from the great unhappiness of
 ‘ being poison’d by the richest food, and
 ‘ highest cordial; of coming for a *blessing*,
 ‘ and carrying away a *curse*. *Amen*, for
 ‘ Jesus sake.

C H A P. IV.

*The christian preparing for the Lord’s-
 supper.*

S E C T. I.

CONSIDER, O my soul, the day is near,
 in which I am to appear at the table
 of my Lord! it concerns me to *prepare*,
 that I may be a *welcome* guest, and a
worthy receiver. *To prepare!* tho’ the ex-
 pression be short, ’tis comprehensive; and I
 shall find it implies more work, than can be
 crowded into a little time, or done with
 a little pains. Let me therefore redeem
 some time from my business, at least from
 my pleasures, before the week be far ad-
 vanced; that unforeseen occurrences may
 not deprive me of an opportunity to dress
 my soul for the glorious solemnity, and put
 me upon the unhappy plunge of missing
 the *feast*, or wanting the *wedding-garment*.

And, O my soul, exert thy self; let all
 thy powers be upon the stretch. *What thou
 findest to do, do it with all thy might*; that thou
 mayst

mayst not ridiculously trifle away that time, which thou seemest conscientiously to redeem.

See to it, that in thy retirements thou be *really* alone; that the world don't follow thee into thy closet; nor thy thoughts fly abroad into the world, and leave a heartless carcass to entertain thy G o d. If thy mind be not fix'd upon the work before thee, thy retirements will be but solemn idleness: or if the world be admitted to put thee by thy duty, the closet will be but a more private *compting-house*.

S E C T. II.

LET me now, O my soul, prepare for my preparations. Let me lay down the plan of my design, that I may not be at a loss how to manage; but may go regularly on, without that confusion of thought, which will lessen the pleasure and profit of my work.

There appear to be several *branches* of that business, which is called by the *general* name of *preparation*. But, before I enter upon particulars, I would first be deeply possessed of the *necessity* of the duty in general; which will quicken me to the greater care and seriousness in a business, that so well deserves it.

To this end consider closely, that an *unprepared* communicant must necessarily be
an

an *unworthy* one. And the danger of eating and drinking unworthily is represented by St. Paul in very awful terms; such a one *eats and drinks damnation to himself.*

Damnation! Tremble, O my soul, at the dismal thought! sure it should strike a chillness into my blood, and a horror into my spirit! can any tongue express, can any mind conceive the direful contents of that expression? however interpreters may *soften* it, the threatening can never be *disarm'd*: the thunder of it must needs put a tender spirit into convulsions and agonies, at least affect him to a very high degree.

To *eat and drink judgment to one's self*, can signify no less than falling under the displeasure of the living God: and who knows, what it is to be the object of *his* angry resentments, in whose *favour is life*, and whose wrath is worse than death? If I eat and drink unworthily, the least I can expect is *temporal* strokes; I am in danger of *spiritual* ones, and deserve *eternal* vengeance. Indeed there is forgiveness with God; but shall I sin, because grace abounds? at that rate, I may venture in defiance of that word, *whoremongers and adulterers God will judge*, &c. or commit the worst of villanies, because God is good, and *plenteous in mercy.*

Nor yet shall this thought deter me from my duty; for upon the same principle I must abstain from hearing, because that will
aggra-

aggravate my condemnation, if I am found disobedient. *The prayer of the wicked is an abomination; yea, the ploughing of the wicked is sin:* and shall I therefore forsake the publick worship of God, or neglect the business of my particular calling?

But, O my soul, let this thought affect thee, so as to quicken thy endeavours, that thou mayst be admitted to the *Lord's-Table*, as a worthy receiver, and return *rejoicing in the God of thy salvation*: let the hopes of this put life into thy attempts: think, and think again, how vast will be the advantage of worthy receiving! what words can express the blessed consequences of a regular attendance at the *Lord's-Table*?

I may expect to have my *faith* strengthened by the representation of my Lord's sufferings: I may hope to have my *love* to him enflamed by the remembrance of his expensive love to me; my *resolutions* confirm'd; my *mind* more spiritualized; and my *whole conversation* made more regular. I may meet with sweet *peace*, and strong *consolation*; yea, perhaps with rapturous joy, *joy unspeakable and full of glory*¹: something that shall prove a cordial under the future troubles of life, and in the agonies of death too. I may there meet with him whom my soul loves; and have such tokens of his love, as shall in the remembrance prove a *continual feast*.

But

¹ 1 Pet. i. 8.

But however, If I am sincere, I shall not be wholly disappointed: *my labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.* I shall get *real* good, if not *sensible*; if not *present*, yet *certain*. I shall reap what I sow, tho' it be long first. The harvest will be *sure*, tho' *late*; and then I shall have an abundant recompence for all the fatigue of the seed-time.

Come then, O my soul, up and be doing; spare no pains in a matter that deserves the utmost diligence, and will well reward it. And that thou mayst not do this important work negligently, lift up thy heart to the father of spirits; without whose gracious influences thou canst do nothing.

‘ O my GOD, *the preparation of the heart of man* is from thee. This I desire to be
‘ so sensible of, as to beg with the utmost
‘ earnestness, that I may be enabled to pre-
‘ pare my self suitably to so solemn an or-
‘ *dinance.*

‘ Oh! impress me with an awful sense of
‘ the danger of receiving unworthily, that
‘ I may not dare to trifle with thee, the
‘ holy and jealous GOD: make me duly to
‘ consider the inexpressible advantage of
‘ worthy receiving; that I may not at once
‘ sin against thee, and wrong my own soul,
‘ by a negligent behaviour: direct me in
‘ every step I am to take, enlighten my mind,
‘ enlarge my heart, raise my affections, keep
‘ off the tempter, keep down my corrup-
‘ tions;

' tions ; and so help me in the whole of my
 ' duty, that I may have this token for good,
 ' that thou designest to meet me and bless
 ' me at that holy solemnity ! It is a great
 ' thing to be duly prepared ; but *thy grace*
 ' *is sufficient for me ; let thy strength be made*
 ' *perfect in my weakness*, and the praise shall
 ' be thine own.

S E C T. III.

LET a man examine himself, and so let
 him eat, says the inspired apostle.
 Come then, O my soul, call thyself to an
 account, whether thou *art* in any measure
 that, which GOD expects every worthy
 communicant *should be*.

Have I *knowledge to discern the Lord's body*?
 am I apprized of the nature and end of this
 ordinance? has not the minister *bestow'd upon*
me labour in vain, when he opened these
 mysteries to me? has what I have read and
 heard about this matter, given me a tole-
 rable notion of it? I know, a man may
 have knowledge enough, and yet eat and
 drink unworthily; but yet, without some
 good measure of understanding, he cannot
 be an *acceptable* communicant.

Do I therefore understand the nature of
 the gospel-covenant, the covenant of grace,
 of which the *sacraments* are *seals*?

Do I know how the *first* covenant was
 broken? into what a sad condition the fall
 of

of our first parents brought their wretched offspring? how it pleased God in infinite mercy to enter into a *new* covenant, thro' a redeemer, in which he has provided for *his own* honour and *our* happiness? do I understand who is the *mediator*, what the *blessings*, and what the *terms* of this covenant?

Do I understand the *relation* that this *sacrament* bears to that *covenant*? that it is *instituted* by the mediator, to whom *all power* is given, *both in heaven and earth* ^m? that it is *designed* to represent the blessings he has purchased, with the manner in which they were procured, and are apply'd? that I am at the Lord's Table to *show forth his death*? that the broken *bread* represents his *body*, which was broken for us; and the *wine* his precious *blood*, which was shed for us? our *eating* that bread, and *drinking* that cup, signifies that fiducial feeding upon him, who is that (and more) to our *souls*, that bread, the *staff of life*, and *wine* that *cheers the heart*, is to our *bodies*.

Do I understand how it *seals* the covenant to every worthy receiver? how hereby God obliges himself to be their God, to pardon their sins, sanctify their souls, and at last bring 'em to eternal happiness and glory? how herein they engage themselves to him, thankfully accepting what he offers, and chearfully complying with what he demands?

mands? that herein we open our mouths to God, and swear, that we will be his, in the bonds of an *everlasting covenant, that shall not be forgotten*; accepting *him*, and resigning *our selves*?

Do I know of what *advantage* this ordinance is to every worthy communicant? how it is design'd to confirm their faith, to enflame their love, purify their consciences, and comfort their souls?

Do I understand how it *produces* these effects? Not in a *natural* way, nor *meerly* in a *moral* one; but by the powerful influences of the *spirit*, dispensed, and to be expected in a devout attendance upon the appointments of infinite wisdom and goodness. Let me put to my own soul that question, which my Saviour put to his disciples, *hast thou understood all these things?*

I must confess, my apprehensions of these things are too dark and confused; but I dare not deny the grace of God, who has given me some acquaintance with these awful mysteries: and I hope I do desire to improve in knowledge, and am willing to receive instruction.

And O that God would teach me what I yet know not, and lead me farther into the knowledge of all necessary truth! oh that he would *shew me his covenant*ⁿ; and help me to *grow in grace, and in the know-*
ledge

ⁿ Psal. xxv. 14.

ledge of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ° !
 that he would reveal to me by his spirit
 those deep things of God, which the natural
 man receiveth not, because they are spiritually
 discern'd ° ! O father of lights, who givest
 wisdom liberally and upbraidest not, make me to
 know the love of Christ, which passeth know-
 ledge, and help me to comprehend, with all saints,
 the breadth, and length, and depth, and height
 of it ° . Amen.

S E C T. IV.

Consider, O my soul, that meer know-
 ledge is not a sufficient qualification
 for the holy communion. If I have know-
 ledge to discern the Lord's body, and want
 faith to feed upon him ; I shall return from
 his table, disappointed and ashamed. My
 blessed Lord has told me, that, *except I eat
 his flesh, and drink his blood, I have no life in
 me* ° . Now this I know must be by faith,
 not after a corporal and carnal manner :
 let me therefore put that question to my
 soul, which my Saviour put to his disciples ;
where is thy faith ? do I believe in an unseen
 Jesus ? do I heartily approve the method
 which God has appointed for man's salva-
 tion, that *being justify'd by faith*, he should have
 peace with God thro' our Lord Jesus Christ ?
 do I heartily submit to the righteousness of God ?
 and

° 2 Pet. iii. 18.

° 1 Cor. ii. 14.

° Eph. iii.

18, 19.

° John vi. 53.

and rejoice in God through him; by whom we have now received the atonement? do I earnestly desire to be found in Christ, not having mine own righteousness, &c. but that which is thro' the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith, that Christ may be made unto me righteousness? believing this as a principal article of my religion, that Christ died for our sins, and so was made sin (a sin-offering) for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him? and do I accordingly lay the stress of my hopes upon the mercy of God in Christ; and under a consciousness of guilt apply to that blood, which cleanses from all sin? can my soul make her applications to him, and derive from his fulness, even grace for grace? am I in any measure acquainted with this mystery? and can I understand, by any experience of my own, what the apostle meant when he said, *I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me*? What should he do at a royal feast, that cannot taste of the provision? am I therefore taught of God to believe in Jesus?

‘ *Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief!*
 ‘ *I hope I have tasted that the Lord is gracious.*
 ‘ *I can remember, when I have sat under*
 ‘ *his shadow with great delight, and his fruit*
 ‘ *has been sweet unto my taste. My soul has*
 ‘ *follow'd hard after him, and I have reason to*
 ‘ *remember his love more than wine. — But alas!*
 ‘ *I have*

‘ I have too much occasion for that prayer,
 ‘ *Lord, increase my faith! without controversy,*
 ‘ *great is the mystery of godliness;* and I am
 ‘ too often apt to stumble at the cross: my
 ‘ temptations to unbelief often find me
 ‘ much sorrowful employment; and at best
 ‘ my faith is but weak and languid. O
 ‘ my God, *perfect that which is lacking in my*
 ‘ *faith;* and when I find its strength, I shall
 ‘ not doubt its reality.

S E C T V.

I Must also enquire concerning my *repentance*. An *impenitent* communicant I know must be an *unworthy* one. That I am a *sinner*, is a matter past question; and that *as such* I am exposed to the displeasure of God; so that, if he should enter into judgment with me, I could not stand, is what I know and believe: yea, that the *least* sin I ever committed *deserves* the wrath and curse of God, both in this world, and that which is to come. But all this is general and common; let me therefore, O my soul, press the matter close and home. And,

First, Have I *laid* these things to heart? have my convictions been affecting? have I not only *known*, but *felt* these things? have I been *weary and heavy laden* under a sense of sin? have I groan'd and trembled under the apprehension of God's displeasure? has
destruction

destruction from the Lord been a terror to me? has my flesh trembled for fear of him, and have I been afraid of his judgments? yea, have I been ashamed of sin, as a nauseous, loathsome, filthy thing; contrary to the nature and law of GOD, and my own happiness too; which consists in conformity to GOD, and enjoyment of him? has the remembrance of my sin fill'd my heart with grief, and my face with shame? especially considering how it has been committed against a GOD of infinite love and goodness? does this thought give a peculiar accent to my grief, that I have sinn'd against a bleeding, dying Jesus, and a forbearing and forgiving GOD? and does the apprehension of pardoning mercy, thro' a redeemer, promote in me the most kindly relentings? according to that, Ezek. xvi. 63.

In the next place; have I been influenced by these convictions to take up a hearty and sincere resolution of better obedience? do I hate every false way? and have I a respect to all God's commandments? Oh! let me remember, that nothing is repentance that consists with an habitual love to any sin, or an allow'd aversion to any instance of duty, or branch of holiness: is my heart and life changed? he that is the same after repentance as he was before, can never be accounted a true penitent.

O my

O my conscience, be faithful: have I put off the old man with his lusts, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness?

I hope it is thus with me, in some measure, that, tho' I offend in many things, I allow my self in nothing, that GOD in his word disallows.—But alas! my repentance is far short of what I know it *should be*, and wish it *were*.

‘ Oh! that he, whose gift repentance (as well as faith) is, would carry on the work which, I trust, is begun! Lord, open my eyes, that I may see more of the evil of sin: strike this heart, this rock, that it may more freely bleed at the remembrance of my past follies: confirm my resolutions, that I may have *nothing more to do with idols*; but may be *stedfast and unmoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord*: search me and try me, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

S E C T. VI.

I must also examine my self concerning my love, an essential and comprehensive grace. If I don't sincerely love the master of the blessed feast, and all the regular guests, I can't be welcome. Come then, O my soul, is thy heart circumcised to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and

with all thy soul? this is the first and great commandment: canst thou truly say, that thy desire is towards him, and thy delight in him? dost thou love not in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth? has he the pre-eminence in thy soul? canst thou say, whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I can desire besides thee? is Christ precious to thee beyond comparison and competition? and canst thou truly say; yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord?

Is thy love to him a *rational* love, the effect of serious thought, and deep conviction of his transcendent excellency? has the spirit of God opened thy eyes, to see that he is the *chief of ten thousands*, and altogether lovely? and canst thou tell, *what* the church's beloved is more than another's beloved?

Is it a *constant* and *fixed* love? not a sudden flash, or transient passion, but a rooted, settled thing; a vigorous flame, which many waters can't quench, nor the floods drown it? and tho' thy love to some dear creatures may unhappily be more passionate; yet art thou come to a point, that thou wilt sacrifice the dearest object, rather than part with *him whom thy soul loves*? — But to bring the matter to a more certain issue;

* Deut. xxx. 6.
lxxiii. 25.

* 1 John. iii. 18.
* Philip. iii. 8.

* Psal.

is thy love *practical*? this is an infallible test; for my Lord has said, *ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you*¹: dost thou count his yoke *easy*, and his burden *light*? are none of his *commandments* grievous? dost thou delight to do his will, and hast thou chose his *testimonies* as a *heritage* for ever? dost thou find his love sweetly *constraining* thee to the severest instances of self-denial? and art thou fully purposed in a better strength than thy own, that thou wilt *follow the lamb whithersoever he goes*, whatever it costs thee? If it be thus with thee, thou mayst chearfully say, *Lord, thou that knowest all things, knowest that I love thee.*

And as a yet farther evidence, dost thou *love thy neighbour as thy self*? hast thou a *real* love for *all* men, and a *special, peculiar* one for thy *fellow-christians*? is there no man, to whom thou dost not most heartily wish well, whatever provocations he has given thee, or injuries he has done thee? tho' thou hast many enemies, has no man an enemy of thee? if there are those that *hate* thee with a *cruel hatred*, canst thou appeal to God, that the hatred is not mutual and reciprocal? canst thou sincerely pray, *forgive our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us*?

And as to the *people of God*, dost thou *honour* and *delight* in 'em? hereby we know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren²: dost thou love every

C 2 soul,

¹ John xv. 14.

² 1 John iii. 14.

soul, where thou seest the image of Christ ? is not thy love *confined* to those of thy own party, or persuasion ? but is it *unrestrained* and large, as that *catholick church* of which thou art a member ? does this love engage thee to all proper *acts of kindness* and expressions of brotherly love ? dost thou pity and help, to the utmost of thy power, all those whom Christ calls brethren, with this view, that what thou dost for them, terminates ultimately upon him, according to *Mat. xxv* ? canst thou read the *first epistle* of *John*, and thy heart not condemn thee ?

I hope my love is *sincere*—
 ‘ But, O my God, how *weak* and how
 ‘ *imperfect* is it ! I even hate my self, that I
 ‘ can love thee no more. I abhor my self,
 ‘ that I love thy Christ no better ; and
 ‘ blush to think that I am no more kindly
 ‘ affectioned to those, whom thou hast loved
 ‘ with an everlasting love ; and with whom
 ‘ I hope to live and converse for ever.

X ‘ My only comfort is, that I *would* love
 ‘ thee ; I *desire* to love thee ; I *long* to love
 ‘ thee, even as thou wouldst be loved.
 ‘ Lord, kindle my spark into a flame, and
 ‘ let that flame be strong and steady ; and
 ‘ especially grant that my *obedience* may prove
 ‘ my love to be of the right kind ; *how can*
 ‘ I say I love thee, if my heart be not right
 ‘ with thee ?—And for thy sake, may I love
 ‘ my neighbour ; especially the happy mem-
 ‘ bers

' bers of that glorious family, to which it
 ' is my highest honour to belong: O may I
 ' love them as my self, and in honour pre-
 ' fer them before my self, and think no
 ' office of love too mean for me to stoop to,
 ' in imitation of him, *who came not to be mi-*
 ' *nister'd unto, but to minister* ^a; *this I pray,*
 ' *that my love may abound more and more* ^b: and
 ' being hearty and fervent in this request,
 ' is, I hope, an evidence that I do truly
 ' love thee. Oh! let me not be mistaken,
 ' for Jesus Christ his sake. *Amen.*

S E C T. VII.

I must also examine my self concerning
 my *new obedience*. This I know is the
ultimate test of all my pretences: without
 it faith, repentance, love, &c. are empty
 names, and insignificant shadows. Is the
 will of G O D my *law*? his word my *rule*?
 and his glory the *end* of all my actions? do
 I allow my self in the commission of no
 known sin, or omission of no known duty?
 is it my constant care to *keep a conscience void*
of offence, both towards God and man? can
 my *closet*, my *family*, my *shop*, my *compa-*
nions, as well as the *publick assemblies* of God's
 people, bear me witness, that, notwithstand-
 ing my unallowed failings, I do endeavour
 to walk in all the *ordinances and commandments*
of God blameless? am I willing to *know* my
 C 3 duty,

^a Matt. xx. 28.^b Philip. i. 9.

duty, and careful to *do it*? am I thankful for instruction, and reproof too; and do I count them my friends that tell me the truth? are my remaining corruptions, and my many failings, matter of humiliation to me? do I pray for daily *grace*, as *heartily* as for my daily *bread*? and can I appeal to the searcher of hearts, that I am never more in earnest, than when I pray that I may be *perfect in every good work, to do his will*^c; that I may be cleansed from all *filthiness, both of flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness, in the fear of the Lord*^d; that I may be *sanctify'd wholly, and my whole spirit, soul and body, be preserved blameless, to the coming of our Lord*^e?

I hope it is *thus* with me in *some measure* —

But, O my God, let me not be deceived!
 If my obedience be feigned, or partial,
 or legal, if it do not exceed *that of the scribes and pharisees*, if I have a *form of godliness without the power*, or a *name to live while I am dead*; discover to me the worst of my self, that I may be upon a right bottom, and may get that *gospel-holiness, without which I cannot see the Lord*. If there be a good work begun, O carry it on to the *day of Jesus*! and let the solemn ordinance I am preparing for, be a means of my spiritual nourishment, and growth in grace. *Amen.*

S E C T.

^c Heb. xiii. 21. ^d 2 Cor. vii. 1. ^e 1 Thess. v. 23.

S E C T. VIII.

I Hope I have *been impartial* in my self-examinations. — And tho' upon review I find abundant matter for humiliation; yet I cannot conclude my self a hypocrite, but must entertain some *good hope thro' grace*, that I am a *sincere*, tho' very *imperfect* christian, and shall be a *welcome* guest at my Lord's table.

That which now remains, is, that I put my self in as *good a posture* as may be, to meet my Lord at that solemnity; that I may not provoke his displeasure, nor baulk my own expectations. To this end I must see that every grace be in lively and vigorous *exercise*, lest, *having in my flock a male, I should vow and sacrifice to the Lord a corrupt thing*.

I am sensible, *faith* is a principal and leading grace: it is the *substance* (or confident expectation) of *things hoped for*, and the *evidence of things not seen*; without *faith* it is *impossible to please God*^e. I cannot question the *being* of a God, and the *certainty* of a *future state*; which are the great principles of *natural religion*, and presupposed to all *reveal'd*. I believe that *God is*, and that *he is the rewarder of all them that diligently seek him*^g. But this is not enough; my Lord has said, *ye believe in God, believe also in me*^h: no knowledge of

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the

^e Mal. i. 14. ^f Heb. xi. 1, 6. ^g Ibid. ^h John. xiv. 1.

the only true God is sufficient to eternal life, while men are ignorant of *that Jesus Christ whom he hath sent*.—Come then, O my soul, let thy faith in him be strong and lively! have I not abundant evidence, that Jesus is the *Messiah*, the Christ of G O D, that *him hath God the father sealed*? The scriptures of the old testament testify of him ^k. To him *Moses and all the Prophets bear witness*^l. In him there was a full and exact accomplishment of every *promise* and *prediction*: in him are the substance of all the *legal shadows*, and to him referr'd all the *types*, &c. he was evidently the *promised seed*, the *Shiloh*, the *branch*, &c. of the ancient fathers, who waited for the consolation of Israel ^m.

Consider, O my soul, what a glorious testimony God bore to him by a voice from heaven; by vast numbers of great, publick and uncontested *miracles*; and finally, by raising him from the dead: of which he appointed competent *witnesses*, men of *ability* and *integrity*: who could not be imposed upon in so plain a matter; and who could never be supposed to practise upon the world, because there was no interest in view that should engage them in so base a design; and it is utterly impossible, that men in their wits should be guilty of the blackest villany, in prospect of nothing but misery and ruin.—
Besides,

^l John xvii. 3.

^k Acts x. 43.

^m John vi. 27. and v. 39.

ⁿ Luke ii. 25.

Besides, did not God also bear them witness, both with signs and wonders, and divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghostⁿ? To which may be added *this other* consideration; that *that doctrine* must needs be from God, which has so visible and peculiar a tendency to make men God-like, in the temper of their minds, and course of their actions: that gospel must needs be the grace of God, which teaches us so effectually, *that, denying ungodliness and all worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present evil world*^o. I find by the records of past ages, and the observations I have made in the compass of my own acquaintance, that the *best christians* have been the *best men*. And, O my soul, canst thou not bear thine own testimony, that *the interest of God in thee* bears a constant proportion to the measure of *thy faith in Christ Jesus*? dost thou not always find, that, when thy *faith* is ready to fail, the good things that remain are ready to die^p? And on the contrary, is thy *heart* ever so pure, and thy *life* so clean, as when thy *faith* is vigorous and lively? Now can any thing be more incredible, than that the great God should make use of an *imposture* to renew his own image upon the souls of men? I will as soon believe any absurdity, as that the most holy God should erect and support his kingdom in the world by a lye; and destroy the

C 5

interest

interest of the devil, by arts and methods perfectly hellish and diabolical.

Come then, O my soul, be *strong in faith, giving glory to God*^a. 'Tis true, believing is hard work; but consider whence the *difficulties* arise! from a *corrupt heart*, and a *malicious enemy*: and let this thought be a farther evidence to the credibility of the doctrine of the cross. Why should a base heart, and a busy devil, make such mighty opposition to the work of faith? If it were not the *work* of God, the *enemies* of God would never make such efforts to hinder it: the devil would cherish his own creature; the world would love its own; and the flesh would never express such a reluctance against the gospel, if it were not *spiritual* in its tendency, and *divine* in its original. Therefore, O my soul, let me form arguments out of difficulties, and pave my way with the very stumbling-blocks, that are thrown in it.

It is indeed an astonishing thought, that God should become man, and *that* man should die: *without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, &c.*^b; but let not this stagger thee. Consider seriously that the more *awful* and *surprising* the mysteries of the gospel are, the more likely they are to be *from* God; who can scarce be supposed to declare any thing but what was extraordinary, and out of the reach of unassisted reason,

^a Rom. iv. 20.

^b 1 Tim. iii. 16.

reason, with such a solemn pomp, and train, of mighty works, as were wrought to confirm the mission of our Lord. It would have been matter of suspicion, if Christ and his disciples had preach'd nothing but what the *Pagan* philosophers taught, and the *Jewish* doctors own'd. And it should recommend the doctrine of Christ to a considering unprejudiced mind, that it was to the *Jews* a *stumbling-block*, and to the *Greeks* *foolishness*¹.

Are not these things so? Come then, O my soul, *believe* and be *established*.

But, O wretched man that I am, *who shall deliver me from this evil heart of unbelief?* It is not bare *external evidence* that will produce a *divine faith*. Faith I know is the work, the mighty work of God, and produced in the heart by no less power than that, which *raised up Jesus from the dead*: it is *not of our selves*; it is the *gift of God*².

And therefore, O my God, I turn me
 ' unto thee, in whose hand my heart is, and
 ' who canst prevail against the united force
 ' of my confederate enemies; and not only
 ' begin, but carry on the *work of faith with*
 ' *power*. I believe, Lord, *help mine unbelief*,
 ' and *perfect that which is lacking in my faith*.
 ' Not only propose the object, but open my
 ' eyes, that I may no more question what the
 ' *gospel reveals*, than what my eyes see; that,
 ' *believing*

¹ 1 Cor. i. 23.

² Eph. i. 20. and ii. 8.]

* *believing in him whom I do not see, I may rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.*

S E C T. IX.

I must also remember my Lord, in the exercise of *holy love*. And, O my soul, if thou dost believe, thou canst not chuse but love. View thy Lord in his glory and beauty : consider him as the *brightness of his father's glory, and the express image of his person* ; think of him as the *chief of ten thousands, and altogether lovely* ; as *one*, whom all created brightness, sweetness, purity, and perfection, does but faintly represent ; as *one*, in whom all that's lovely meets and triumphs ; as *one*, whom the highest *angels* worship, and by whom the most shining *seraphs* are eclipsed ; who yet adore, prostrate, and veil before him with more exultation and rapture, than they would govern a thousand worlds. Think of him as *one*, whose glories no thought can reach, nor words express ; and whom the multitude of the heavenly host will view with everlasting surprize and admiration, as an object ever new, and infinitely entertaining ; and as desiring no farther happiness, than to *be with him where he is, and behold his glory* .

And, O my soul, consider that this glorious person, who is in himself so infinitely lovely,

lovely, has been infinitely *kind to thee!* need this be *proved*, or can the instances of it be *forgotten*? did not his love to thee appear beyond all contradiction, in his *incarnation, birth, sufferings and death*, with all the circumstances of humility that attended his passage thro' this *vale of tears, this waste and howling wilderness*, to that *better country*, where he is still mindful of his people, as *ever living to make intercession for 'em*? he loved thee before thou or time were: he loved thee, when he was *on earth*, with a love *stronger than death, which many waters could not quench, nor floods drown*: he loves thee now he is *in heaven*; and tho' he be exalted to the highest dignity, far above all principalities and powers, and *sits at the right hand of God as Lord of all*, yet hast thou the same place in his heart, and the same share in his affectionate remembrances. Long absence, great distance, high preferment, multiplicity of affairs, which impair common friendship, have no influence there: *having loved his own which were in the world*, he does and will love them *to the end*^{*}, and that with a love more constant, steady and regular, than the revolutions of the heavenly bodies, and the settled course of nature. Nor is this love of his an *empty name*. Consider, O my soul, the glorious effects of it. 'Tis a love big with blessings; blessings which no tongue can represent, and nothing here below resemble, but

* John xiii. 1.

with a great deal of faintness and imperfection: he has loved me and washed me from my sins in his blood^r: he was made sin for me, that I might be made the righteousness of God, in him^z: he was wounded for my transgressions, and bruised for mine iniquities; the chastisement of my peace was upon him, and with his stripes I am healed^a: being justified by faith, I have peace with God through him^b; and by him access with boldness to the throne of grace^c. To his expensive love, as the meritorious cause, I owe my regeneration, that I am begotten again to a lively hope: my adoption, that I am call'd a child of God: my sanctification, my peace, comfort and joy; and finally, my hopes of eternal life; which is all that heart can wish, and ten thousand thousand times more; for the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, have not enter'd into the heart of man^d.

Nor let me, O my soul, forget who is the unworthy object of all this glorious love; what am I, and what is my father's house, that I should be thus highly favour'd? that the prince of life, the living God, should set his heart upon such a dead dog; that a vile worm, sinful dust and ashes, should be so regarded by him, whom all the angels worship, whom the whole creation obeys, and in comparison of whom all created beings are

^r Rev. i. 5. ^z 2 Cor. v. 21. ^a Isai. liii. 5.
^b Rom. v. 1. ^c Heb. iv. 16. ^d 1 Cor. ii. 9.

are as the drop of a bucket, and the small dust of a ballance! nothing, yea less than nothing, and vanity! behold what manner of love is this! expression is at a loss, and silent admiration must supply its place.

Now, does not this love deserve love? whence is it, O my soul, that thou art no more affected? that in these musings the fire burns no more? one would think, that, upon such a subject, serious thoughts should exalt even a spark of love into a flame of transport and extasy! and whence is all this coldness?

Oh 'tis from my evil heart of unbelief! the things are so great that they even exceed belief! but let me consider that God's ways are not as ours, nor his thoughts as ours, but more above 'em than the heavens are above the earth^c! and that his benefits are in suitable proportion to his own greatness. Royal favours use to be vast and magnificent: they give like kings; and what less can be expected from the King of kings, the infinite majesty of heaven and earth, than what he has pleased to appoint for his favourites! and the more mean the objects of his love are, the more glorious his bounty! the lower his goodness stoops, the higher it rises! but that it should stoop so low as me, the least, and less than the least of all saints, nay the very chief of sinners; this, this staggers my faith, and makes me ready to cry out; " 'tis impossible, it can
 " never

“ never be, that God should love such a
 “ worm, such a devil as I am! a vile traitor,
 “ that have broken his laws, despised his
 “ grace, *quenched his spirit, trampled under*
 “ *foot his son!* an ungracious *dog*, that has
 “ turn’d his *grace into wantonness*, and con-
 “ tinued in sin in spite of all reclaiming
 “ methods! a backsliding, treacherous, per-
 “ jured beast! and under the convictions of
 “ all this, no more moved than a clod, or a
 “ rock! a stupid hard-hearted sinner!”—this
 I must confess I find difficult to believe; and
 when I can hope, I wonder at my self that
 I can venture to do it; and adore the grace
 and mercy of God, that I have not long
 ago been a *Cain* or a *Judas*, or at least a
Spira, a *magor-missabib*, a terror to my self
 and all about me, by reason of the black-
 ness and horror of my despair!

And yet here infinite *mercy*, and infinite
merit, are a relief! I will believe that there
 is mercy for the *worst*, because God has said
 it; and I won’t venture to except my self,
 because God has not done it: *all things are*
possible with God; he can *forgive frankly* ten
 thousand talents, as well as a few pence: and
 he will *forgive manifold iniquities*, and *mighty*
sins, to every penitent, humble, willing
 soul. I must not deny the grace of God;
 and therefore, if I do avouch this character,
 consequently I must believe.

And

And then how can I chuse but love? Oh my soul, fall with the lowest prostrations, at the feet of thy dearest *Jesus*; and if thou canst do no better, express thy love by *sighs* and *blushes*, that thou canst love him no more.

‘ But, Lord, I may expostulate with my
 ‘ self till I am weary, if thy *grace* be with-
 ‘ held, and thy *spirit* deny’d! O *shed abroad*
 ‘ *thy love in my heart, by the Holy Ghost given*
 ‘ *unto me!* strike this rock, and it shall melt;
 ‘ breathe upon this clod, and it will warm;
 ‘ draw me, and I shall *run after thee*. I
 ‘ cannot say that I *do* love thee; but I am
 ‘ sure I can say, that I *would* love thee: this
 ‘ *thou knowest*, that *knowest all things*. I can
 ‘ appeal to thee, that, if I might have my
 ‘ wish, I would love thee better than any
 ‘ *saint* on earth, yea than any *angel* in hea-
 ‘ ven does. I had rather love thee, as I
 ‘ ought to love thee, than be master of all
 ‘ the treasures on earth; rather, than have
 ‘ all the monarchs of it at my feet; rather,
 ‘ than have all that the world admires
 ‘ at my disposal. I had rather (Lord *thou*
 ‘ *knowest!*) die in an ecstasy of holy love, and
 ‘ breathe out my soul into the arms of the
 ‘ holy *Jesus*, than live ten millions of years;
 ‘ yea to all eternity, in the fulness of all
 ‘ created enjoyments. O my God, is not
 ‘ this a request after thine own heart, when
 ‘ I pray that I may love thee with all my
 ‘ soul,

' soul; and that I may not be most flat and
' heavy, cold and lifeless, at that solemnity,
' where are the memorials of the choicest
' and most glorious love, that was ever
' known or heard of?

S E C T. X.

I Must also, at the Lord's table, be in a
penitent frame. The remembrance of my
Lord's dying love must melt my heart into
a kindly sorrow for those sins which wound-
ed and slew him. *His soul was made an offer-*
ing for my sin^s; and shall not *my heart* bleed
at the thought of that *bitter cup*, in which
my sins were deadly ingredients, and which
for my sake he drank off, even to the very
dregs? O my soul, when I remember my
Saviour, I must penitently remember my
sins, from which he died to save me. My
sins! how wide a field! how vast a subject!
I am amazed, and stagger at the *general*
prospect, and must be swallowed up and
lost in *particulars*! where shall I begin, and
where shall I end? Indeed I may begin at
the root. *Behold! I was shapen in iniquity, and*
in sin did my mother conceive me^h! but the
numerous branches exceed calculation! I
know not the numbers thereof! the commandment
of God is exceeding broad; and in proportion
to it I must estimate my guilt! what com-
mandment have I not broken? in what in-
stance

stance have I not offended? as to my sins of ignorance and common frailties, I must only sigh and say, *who can understand his errors*ⁱ? for, to remember and lament my grosser follies, will be a long as well as sorrowful employment, and take up more time than my circumstances can allow. But, O my soul, I charge thee mourn over the more heinous offences of thy life: read over thy calendar, and drop a tear upon the *black days there* *.

N. *Here call sorrowfully to mind such particular sins, as have been more especially heinous.*

And tho' I hope God has forgiven thee, yet, O my soul, never forgive thy self. O what shall I say? *I blush and am ashamed to lift up my face to thee my God*^k! I could have no peace, no patience, no hope, were it not for such a word as that: *the blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanses from all sin*^l.

I would also particularly review my conversation, since the *last sacrament*. And here I can find matter enough for shame and grief. Oh! wretch that I am, how unsuitable has my conversation been to the profession and engagements I so lately made, and the sweet experiences I so much rejoiced in, and seem'd so thankful for?

N. *Here*

ⁱ Psal. xix. 12.

* Bp. Wilkins.

^k Ezr. ix. 6.

^l 1 John i.

N. *Here fix your thoughts upon the grosser follies of the preceding month.*

Was such an *action* becoming what thou didst so lately, at the Lord's table, pretend and promise? was such a management worthy of a *christian*, and becoming a *communicant*? did the indulgence of such a fleshly lust become a *disciple* of the holy *Jesus*, the immaculate *lamb of God*? did it become a sheep of *Christ's* flock, to wallow like a swine in that mire? was that *pride*, that *passion*, that *malice*, *envy*, and *uncharitableness*, suitable to thy solemn profession of retaining to him, who came to *destroy the works of the devil* ^m? Remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame! surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man ⁿ!

And, O my soul, shall not the time past suffice thee°, to have acted so inconsistently and unaccountably? surely it becomes me to say, *if I have done iniquity, I will do so no more*. Let these be my sincere *resolutions*; and let me, at the *Lord's table*, bind my self in fresh bonds, that my future *walk* shall be more circumspect; that my *devotions* shall be more regular; my *dealings* more just; my *charity* more extensive; and my *whole conversation* more spiritual.

‘ O my God, this is my full purpose;
‘ but let me not want that *grace*, which alone
‘ is

‘ *is sufficient for me: give me true repentance ;*
 ‘ *let me take up sincere resolutions ; and let*
 ‘ *the uprightness of my heart in both ap-*
 ‘ *pear in a suitable behaviour for time to*
 ‘ *come. So be it, for Jesus sake,*

CHAP. V.

The christian at the Lord's Table.

SECT. I.

NOW, O my soul, the good hand of
 God upon thee has brought thee
 into his house, and set thee at his table! behold
all things are ready! see to it that thou be
 ready to meet and entertain thy Lord.

‘ *Awake, O North wind, and come thou*
 ‘ *South, blow upon my garden, that the spices*
 ‘ *thereof may flow out: let my beloved come into*
 ‘ *his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits* ⁹¹.

‘ *When the king comes in to see his guests,*
 ‘ *may I not be the man that wants a wed-*
 ‘ *ding garment* ⁹²?

‘ *Tis an awful solemnity! O my soul, ap-*
 ‘ *proach with reverence and godly fear.*

This is none other but the house of God, and
this is the gate of heaven ⁹³: let my frame be
 suitable, *spiritual and heavenly.*

‘ *O my God, keep off the tempter, keep*
 ‘ *out*

⁹¹ Sol. song iv. 16.
 xxviii. 17.

⁹² Mat. xxii. 11.

⁹³ Gen.

' out the world, keep down my corruption,
 ' Let no lust defile: let no business en-
 ' gage: let no impertinent thought divert
 ' my mind. *Unite my heart*; and let it be
 ' intent and fix'd in thee.

' Thy grace, O Lord, is sufficient for me:
 ' let thy strength be made perfect in my weakness.

' *Work in me both to will and do: strengthen*
 ' *me with all might, by thy spirit, in the inward*
 ' *man.*

' Call up my faith and love, and every
 ' proper grace, into lively and vigorous ex-
 ' ercise.

' *Blessed Jesus, without thee I can do nothing.*
 ' *I can do all things thro' Christ strengthening me.*
 ' *Draw me, I will run after thee.*

S E C T. II.

While the minister is breaking the bread.

THUS was the *body* of my Lord bro-
 ken! *It pleased the Lord to bruise him,*
and put him to grief!

*He was bruised for our Iniquities *!*

Oh let me view the representation of his
broken body, with a broken heart, and a contrite
spirit!

Hard indeed must that heart be, which
 such a sight will not affect!

Methinks I see his precious body scourged
 and pierc'd! it is an affecting thought, that
 perfect

perfect innocence should be thus treated! but when I consider, that this innocent lamb was at the same time God over all blessed for ever, and that he underwent all this for me, what must my heart be, if it ben't affected! And while his body was thus bruised, the iron enter'd into his soul. Who can imagine what our Lord felt, when he cried out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

See here what an evil and bitter thing sin is; and how abominable in the sight of God; when no less a sacrifice could appease incensed Justice!

Here is grace! here is love! that God should prepare his own son for a body; and that in that body, he should bear our sins on the tree!

S E C T. III.

While the minister is pouring out of the wine,

THUS was my Lord's blood shed for me.

We are redeem'd not with corruptible things, as silver or gold; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

If the blood of bulls and goats sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of him, who thro' the eternal spirit offer'd himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works, to serve the living God?

Oh

Oh let me view a bleeding Jesus with a
bleeding heart!

Behold the fountain set open for sin and for
uncleanness! The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses
from all sin.

Approach, apply, O my soul, wash and
be clean: *purge with this byssop, and thou
shalt be clean; wash in this laver, and thou
shalt be whiter than the snow.*

What may not be expected from the blood
of God? the blood of him, that was God?

Oh how freely did he let out his blood!
view with transport those streams of love;
and think how much thou owest to him,
who so freely laid down his life for thee!

Oh my God, enlarge my heart in love
to such a friend; and never let my heart
be straitned towards him, who open'd his
veins and so freely bled and died for
me.

May my eye affect my heart; and may
I with the utmost tenderness remember
what evidences he has given of his love to
me.—*Was ever love like this!*

* 1 John i. 7. † Psal. li. 7. ‡ V. Acts xx. 28.

S E C T.

S E C T. IV.

Taking *the bread, &c.*

Blessed *Jesus*, thou art *that bread of life*: thy broken body is food for souls. Oh let me by faith eat and live, eat and never die^z!

‘ When *Judas took the sop*, Satan entered into him: Lord grant, that, as I receive this bread, Christ may enter, and take an eternal possession of my soul!’

Now, O my soul, take a whole *Jesus*, with a whole heart, for a whole salvation.

Lord, I am not worthy thou shouldest come under my roof.

I am indeed infinitely unworthy, but I hope, thro’ grace, not utterly unwilling.

O were but my appetite to this spiritual food equal to my need of it; how wide would my soul open her mouth, and how full would she be filled^a!

‘ Oh thou, who hast provided bread, give me an appetite, and abundantly bless my provision!’

‘ Lord, increase my faith!’

‘ O let this bread be blest to my spiritual nourishment, and growth in grace!’

‘ O that I may receive out of Christ’s fulness even grace for grace^b!’

By these royal dainties, may my lean and withering soul become fat and flourishing^c!

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His

^z John vi. 48, 49, 50.

^a Psal. lxxxi. 10.

^b John i. 16.

^c Psal. xcii. 14.

His flesh is meat indeed^a.

O my soul, accept and resign ; take a Jesus, and surrender thy self. *My Lord and my God, I am thine, save me.*

I avouch the Lord this day to be my God^e : his I am, and him I'll serve^f.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places, in Christ^g.

Blessed be GOD for Jesus Christ.

Thanks be to GOD for his unspeakable gift.

S E C T. V.

Taking the Cup, &c.

T His Cup is the New Testament in my Lord's blood^h !

I will take the cup of salvation, and pay my vows.

Christ's blood is drink indeedⁱ !

I take this cup of blessing, and O adored be his love that was made a curse for me^k, that he might fill this cup with blessing.

O how freely did my Lord drink of the brook in the way^l ! Remember, O my soul, that love, which made him say, the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it^m ? It was a bitter cup to him, and yet he drank the very dregs of it.—It is a cup

^a John vi. 55.

^e Deut. xxvi. 17.

^f Acts

xxviii. 23.

^g Eph. i. 3.

^h 1 Cor. xi. 25.

ⁱ John

vi. 55.

^k Gal. iii. 13.

^l Ps. cx. 7.

^m John xviii. 11.

cup of blessing to me, and shall I not cheerfully drink of it in remembrance of him?

Blessed Jesus, thou hast drank at the hand of the Lord the cup of his fury: Thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, and wrung them out^a; and hast put into my hand this cup of consolation. Behold what manner of love!

O precious blood, that cleanses from all sin!

Drink, O my soul, and remember Jesus.

Drink, and mourn over thy sins and follies.

Drink, and receive thy pardon.

Drink, and renew thy covenant.

Drink, and forget thy sorrows.

Drink, and forgive thy enemies.

Drink, and triumph over the adversaries of thy soul.

Drink, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Blessed Jesus, I will remember thy love more than wine^b.

Unto him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, and his Father: to him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen^c.

Blessed be God for Jesus Christ.

Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.

^a *Isai. li. 17.* ^b *Sol. Song. i. 4.* ^c *Rev. i. 5, 6.*

S E C T. VI.

At the conclusion of the ordinance.

Worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

Blessing, honour, glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the lamb, for ever and ever^a.

How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! blessed are they that dwell in thy house; a day in thy courts is better than a thousand; I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness^r.

And, O my soul, if this hour has been so sweet, while I beheld the king in his glory, and the land which is afar off, tho' it were as in a glass darkly, what will an eternity in heaven be! when I shall see him as he is, and know as I am also known! when I shall be with him where he is, and behold his glory! make haste, O my beloved.

Thus I must remember my Lord till he comes: blessed be God for such an ordinance! But O that my soul could even break for the longing I have for that second coming; when he shall appear to them that look for him, without sin, unto salvation^s.

He has said, *behold I come quickly; even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly*^t; in the mean time,

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^a Rev. v. 12, 13.

^r Psal. lxxxiv. 1, 4, 10.

^s Heb. ix. 28.

^t Rev. xxii. 20.

O my soul, remember *where* thou hast been, and *what* thou hast been doing! Thou hast opened thy mouth to the Lord, and must not go back: thou hast bound thy soul with an oath: thou hast sworn, and must perform it, to keep his righteous judgments.

Thou hast avouched, this day, the Lord to be thy God: be true to him: let him alone be exalted in thy soul: be for him, and not for another.

‘ Now, O my God, I bless thee for the
 ‘ liberty of thy house: I bless thee for the
 ‘ aids of thy spirit: the shame of my mis-
 ‘ behaviour I take to myself; but all the
 ‘ praise I give to thee. Oh by thy grace
 ‘ help me, as I have received Christ Jesus the
 ‘ Lord, so to walk in him^u, that where he is,
 ‘ I, his unworthy servant, may also be. Amen
 ‘ and Amen.

C H A P. VI.

*The christian in his retirements, after the
 Lord's Supper.*

S E C T. I.

When the ordinance has been comfortable.

Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is
 within me bless his holy name: bless the
 Lord, O my Soul, and forget not all his benefits;

D 3

who

^u Col. ii. 6.

who crowneth thee with loving-kindness, and tender mercies: who satisfieth thy mouth with good things ^w. How thankful ought I to be, that the doors of God's house have been open to me, and that I have had the freedom of his table! whence is this to me, that I, who have long ago deserved to be shut up among the spirits in prison, and fed with the bread of affliction, and water of affliction, should be admitted a guest at such a feast! A feast of fat things, and of wine upon the lees, well refined! that I should see the king in his glory, and sit with him at his table; who might have expected e're now to have been banish'd for ever from his presence, and have heard that killing word, *see my face no more!*

Blessed be God, that he let me live to see this day, this joyful day! that I was not prevented by a surprising stroke, and led captive by death into the chambers of that house appointed for all living, long before this!

Blessed be his name, that I have been suffered to live no longer in the neglect of such a sweet and profitable ordinance! that he convinced me of my duty, brought me to resolve, and confirmed my resolutions: so that, in spite of all the malice of Satan, I have given up myself to the Lord, and to his church, by the will of God^x. This is what I had design'd once and again, but Satan hindered! blessed be the captain of my salvari-

on,

^w Psal. ciii. 1, &c.

^x 2 Cor. viii. 5.

on, that he has hindered no longer ! that all the mighty hosts of objections, he had mustered up, could not deter me from my duty ; that I was *willing in the day of thy power* !

Blessed be God that my *natural sloth*, and *love of ease*, did not make me baulk a duty, which requires industry and laborious application, in preparing for it : that my *eagerness after the world* did not make me grudge the time, which a worthy communicant must redeem from his secular affairs, for this solemn service : especially, that my unbelieving *doubts and scruples, fears and jealousies*, did not put me by my duty, under apprehensions of unfitness and unworthiness.

I am also bound to praise him, for the assistance of his holy spirit and grace ; that my mind was in any measure composed ; that the *desire of my soul was towards him, and the remembrance of his name* ; that I have reason to hope I was sincere, and acted in the integrity of my heart : tho' I must blush that I did no better ; I must bless him I did so well ; *not I, but the grace of God with me ! not unto us, Lord, not unto us !*

But, O my soul, don't let thy gratitude be only in *general* terms : review the whole affair, and be *particular* in the acknowledgments. There may be great love expressed in circumstances seemingly minute ;

D 4

the

the recollection of which may afford great delight, and does demand a grateful resentment.

I am bound to bless my God, that by his kind providence he *brought me* to that *banqueting-house*, where his banner over me was *love*¹; that the doors of his *sanctuary* were open; that my lot is not cast in those places, where the *synagogues of God* are destroyed, his ministers *driven into corners*, and devout souls forced to gather the *heavenly manna*, their spiritual food, with the *peril of their lives*. Blessed be G o d, that by the favour of our governors (whom the Lord bless and preserve!) we may assemble together, and *none make us afraid*: that he *prepares a table for us in the presence of our enemies*²: and if the sons of *Belial* malign and curse us, they cannot destroy us, nay dare not disturb us. Blessed be God they can't insult us, and say, *where is now your God?* we may now go with the multitude, go to the house of God with the voice of joy and praise, with the multitude that keep *holy-day*³. Blessed be his name, that we, who can boldly avouch ourselves to be of those that *are quiet in the land*^b, are allowed to enjoy our native rights, and are not by the rulers counted disturbers of the publick peace, or *hurtful to kings*^c.

I

¹ Sol. Song ii. 4. ² Pf. xxiii. 5. ^a Pf. xlii.
3, 4. ^b Pf. xxxv. 20. ^c Ezr. iv. 15.

I must also praise him, that no *evil beset* me, nor *plague came nigh my dwelling*; which might have *shut me up*, tho' the *doors* of his house were open: that *my house* was not shut up, and a *Lord have mercy* writ over it: that no *evil disease cleaved to me*^d; nor were my *loins filled with a loathsome disease*^e; which would have confined me to my bed, or chamber, and forbid my going up to the house of the Lord: that the *secret of God was upon my tabernacle*, and no *fore calamity beset* me, that would have unhinged my mind, and made me incapable of attending at the *ordinance*, with any composure and devotion. Blessed be God, that I had not occasion for *Aaron's apology*, when he had neglected to eat the *sin-offering* in the holy place, &c. and *Moses* expostulated with him upon it: *such things have befallen me, and if I had eaten the sin-offering to-day, should it have been accepted in the sight of the Lord*^f? Especially I would be thankful, that God did not withdraw his spirit, unchain the devil, and let loose my corruption, so that being *overtaken with some heinous fault*, or *harass'd with some grievous temptation*, I should not have dar'd to approach to the *jealous God* in that *holy ordinance*; but my *place* must needs have been *empty*, because an accusing devil, and condemning conscience, would clamour and say, *he is not clean, surely he is not clean*^g!

D 5

I

^d Pf. xli. 8.^e Pf. xxxviii. 7.^f Levit. x. 19.^g 1. Sam. xx. 26.

I would also praise my God, that I was not disappointed by his hand upon the *minister*, the *steward* of these *mysteries*: that sickness or other calamities did not disable him for his master's service: that God was with him, according to his kind promise: that *Christ Jesus was with his spirit*, and gave him the *tongue of the learned* to speak a word in season. How awfully did he warn us, that we should not presume to approach without the *wedding-garment*! how sweetly did he encourage every devout and willing soul, to come with *boldness to the throne of grace*, and by faith to draw water out of the wells of *salvation*! how pathetically did he represent the sufferings of our Lord! how earnestly press faith in his blood, and conformity to his death! how passionately did he recommend his example, and encourage universal obedience, by displaying the happiness of those that serve and follow him; who shall be with him where he is, and behold his glory! how fervently did he pray for the effusion of the *Holy Spirit* upon every sincere soul! that God would remember us, from the greatest to the least, with the love which he bears to his own, and visit us with his salvation; that never a communicant at that table might be missing at the right hand of *Christ* another day! that we might all sit down with *Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*, in the kingdom of God; and enter into that rest, which remains for the people of God!

Blessed

Blessed be God, that his mouth was not shut, nor his spirit straitned, as a just punishment of my sins; whereby I have provoked him to abridge me of those privileges I have so wretchedly misimprov'd!

I must also bless his name, that he *did not deny his grace*, nor *with-hold his spirit*, when I approach'd his table: altho' my preparations were so short, so vastly below the standard of the *sanctuary*, and my whole management sadly defective, nevertheless I hope I did meet with *him, whom my soul loves*: and the kindness of my Lord exceeded my expectations, as well as my deserts. Blessed be God, it did not fare with me, according to the presages of my guilty misgiving heart! I expected *killing frowns*, and to my great surprise was welcom'd with *reviving smiles*; he *lifted up the light of his countenance upon me*, spoke good and comfortable words to me, and sent me *away with mirth, and with songs, with tabret, and with harp*^h.

I will praise him, that he *help'd my unbelief*: that, tho' I am of *little faith*, it was not to seek, when it should be in exercise. I would affectionately remember his kindness, in enabling me to *realize* invisible things; that, when I saw the *elements*, I could look thro' them to the *blessed object* they were appointed to represent: tho' I am apt to be

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like

^h Gen. xxxi. 27.

like unbelieving *Thomas*, yet *then* (through my Saviour's adorable condescension) I was *not faithless, but believing*ⁱ. He so discovered himself to my soul, that I could not forbear saying, *my Lord and my God!* I thought, I no more doubted, that *Jesus* was the *Messiah*, him *whom God the Father sealed*; than if I had been by, *when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory*; "*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*" I thought I as firmly believed his dying upon the cross for *my sins*, as tho' I had been present at the awful spectacle; as tho' I had stood by with the *blessed virgin*, and the *beloved disciple*^k. I saw by faith his body broken, and his blood flow; what inward agonies his countenance expressed, when he cried out, "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" And with how glorious a mixture of majesty, love, and sorrow he look'd; when, having said, *It is finished*, he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost^l.

I was enabled, without any hesitation, to believe, that as he died, so he *rose again, according to the scriptures*^m: that, tho' he *was dead, he is alive, and lives for evermore*ⁿ. I was almost, in my own mind, a witness of his *ascension*; doubting no more of it, than if I had been among the *men of Galilee*, when

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ⁱ John xx. 27.^k John xix. 25.^l Ver. 30.^m 1 Cor. xv. 4.ⁿ Rev. i. 18.

he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight °. I was as firmly persuaded of his sitting at the right hand of God, there pleading the cause, and managing the affairs of his church; as if my eyes had seen the king in his beauty, and the land which is afar off^p. Yea I could, I thought, look for his second appearance (which is to be without sin unto salvation) with as much confidence, as if I had heard the two angels say, *why stand ye here gazing up into heaven! this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall come in like manner as ye have seen him go up into heaven^q*.

Yea, blessed be God, I was enabled to believe in this Jesus, as my Saviour. I was encouraged to say, this body was broken for me; this blood was shed for me: the Son of God loved me, and gave himself for me^r. And tho' I had a deep sense of my own unworthiness, and had manifold iniquities and mighty sins to mourn over; yet (praised be his name) I was borne above my usual fears and scruples, and by a holy violence, as it were, obliged to believe in hope, tho' against hope^s. I saw myself vile and base as hell, one of the worst and chief of sinners: and yet I durst not despair, because I had that word set home, *the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin^t*. My dear Lord seem'd to smile, and say, *Be of good cheer, be not afraid,*
it

° Acts i. 9.
* Gal. ii. 20.

^p Isaï. xxxiii. 17.
* Rom. iv. 18.

^q Acts. i. 11.
* 1 John i. 7.

it is I^u. Come unto me, ye that are weary and heavy laden^x: and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out^y. Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely^z.

Indeed my unbelieving heart was ready to say, *How can these things be?* can such a worm be the object of everlasting love? can such a vile polluted wretch pretend relation to, and interest in the holy Jesus, and expect admission into his holy hill? I was like Jacob, when he heard the news of Joseph's being alive, the Lord of Egypt; his heart fainted, for he believed them not^a. But my spirit was revived, when my Lord shewed me the provisions he had made for my going to possess the kingdom: And when I was helped to consider, that nothing is too great to be expected from infinite mercy, thro' infinite merits; blessed be God, I could cry out, *Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.*

I must also adore and bless him, that his love was shed abroad in my heart^b, in a degree beyond what I could have expected; considering what a rock of ice, what a stupid, senseless thing this heart is. I beheld my Lord's glory, and could scarce forbear crying out aloud; *this is my friend, this is my beloved, O ye daughters of Jerusalem^c.* I thought

^u Mark vi. 50. ^x Matt. xi. 28. ^y John vi.
37. ^z Rev. xxii. 17. ^a Gen. xlv. 26. ^b Rom. v. 5.
^c Sol. Song. v. 16.

thought, I saw him, as the church describes him^c; and could heartily join in that acclamation, *Yea, he is altogether lovely*. Oh how did I wish for nearer access to him, and clearer views of him! *My soul did thirst for God, for the living God: yea, as the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so did my soul pant after him*^d. I could have been even willing to have died in an ecstasy of love, that I might not have lost the sight of so glorious an object to all eternity.

Oh how did the tokens of his expensive love affect my soul, and fill me with gratitude! I thought, I could have died a thousand deaths for him, who *loved me and gave himself for me*. And Oh may I never forget, how ashamed and confounded I was then, to think of the sins and miscarriages of my past life; when I call'd to remembrance some of the many omissions and commissions, that are upon record in my conscience, how did my heart smite me? Oh, thought I, *is this thy kindness to thy friend! dost thou thus requite the Lord, O foolish creature, and unwise!* are these suitable returns to such amazing love? for which of his good works has he been thus treated, so neglected, so affronted by thee? is it not *high time* for me to *awake out of sleep*, to take up more firm and steady resolutions of better obedience? sure the *time past shall suffice* to have acted so unworthy

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^c Sol. Song, chap. v.

^d Psal. xlii. 1, 2.

thy of a *christian*, and of a *man*; yea to have debased my self below the *beasts that perish*: for the *ox knows his owner*, and the *ass his master's crib* ^e.

Therefore I offer up my solemn thanksgiving to GOD, that he has by his spirit and grace enabled me thus to *believe* and *love*; to *repent* and *resolve*. It is *he* has *work'd in me both to will and do*; and *his* shall be the praise: else it had been with me as at other times, when to my shame I must own I went to the table *dull*, and return'd *stupid*; I went *dejected*, and return'd *disconsolate*; when the whole of my performance was meer *bodily exercise*, which I found *profited nothing*. I must ascribe it to his grace, that it was better with me than usual; for, let others pretend what they will, for my part I find that I *am not sufficient of my self* to any thing spiritually good: *in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing*.

Now, O my GOD, accept my thankful acknowledgments: let me keep a sense of thy love ever fresh upon my soul: and especially help me to *walk worthy* of my profession and privileges; let me never *tread under foot the Son of God*, nor count *the blood of the covenant, wherewith I am sanctify'd, an unholy thing* ^f. Amen. For Jesus *fake*.

S E C T.

S E C T. II.

When the Ordinance has not answer'd expectation.

I Have been at the *table* of my Lord ; where he uses to meet and bless his people : I went with raised hopes that (tho' infinitely unworthy) I should have communion *with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ* ; that I should be richly entertained, and return rejoicing : but alas how sadly am I disappointed ! *I came to the pits and found no water ! I am return'd with my vessels empty ! I am ashamed and confounded*^h ! I had prepar'd a *song of praise*, and thought to have closed the *festival* with *Hosanna's to the Son of David* : but woe is me, I am forced to *hang my harp upon the willows*. *My feast is turn'd into mourning, and my songs into lamentation, and the end thereof as a bitter day*ⁱ. My mind was dark, my heart hard, my thoughts confused, my affections disorder'd, my soul and all within me utterly out of frame ; I could neither believe, nor repent, nor hope, nor love, nor do any thing as I ought to do. I tried and struggled with my self in vain. I was as it were fetter'd, pinion'd and becalm'd, and my very heart asleep. In the mean time *my enemies were lively*^k ; the devil busy, and the world importunate ; yea, ten thousand trifles amusing and distracting me.

O wretched

^g 1 John i. 3.

^h Jer. xiv. 3.

ⁱ Amos viii. 10.

^k Psal. xxxviii. 19.

O wretched man that I am¹! When I should have been best, I was worst! *When I would do good, evil is present with me^m!* I even tremble to think, what a guest I was at that holy table; and cannot but wonder that the master of the feast did not single me out and say, *Friend, how camest thou in hither?* that he did not say to his servants, *Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darknessⁿ.* I am amazed at the patience of GOD, that he could bear with such trifling, and did not awaken my drowsy soul by some terrible judgment; that, seeing the *threatning* affected me no more, he did not try what the *execution* would do, according to that of the apostle; *for this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep^o.*

I adore the divine patience, and will not despair of forgiveness thro' the blood of Jesus: But I cannot *forgive* my self; and am even out of all *patience*, when I consider how stupid I have been, and how unaccountably I have managed. I could wish the severest providence had detain'd me; that any thing, *but sin*, had prevented me from prophaning such an ordinance, contracting so much guilt, incurring such danger, and creating my self so much sorrow.—But alas! 'tis *in vain*, and perhaps *unlawful* so to wish.

Come then, O my soul, instead of spending time in fruitless lamentations, consider seriously

¹ Rom. vii. 24.
12, 13.

^m Ver. 21.

ⁿ Matt. xxii.

^o 1 Cor. ix. 30.

seriously what the present circumstance makes thy duty. Humble thy self deeply before God, and *intreat his favour* : see if there be any ground of comfort ; and labour to improve so sad a disappointment (if possible) to some good purpose.

‘ *God be merciful to me a sinner !* I acknowledge my iniquity, and desire to take to my self that shame which is my due : *Against thee, O Lord, have I sinned, and thou must be justify’d when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest^p.* There was nothing wanting on thy part ; *all things were ready^q* : I found a table spread, and a cup flowing. The *minister* perform’d his part faithfully and devoutly ; and it was *only my own* fault, that it was not a sweet and edifying ordinance to me, as well as others. It was my own sloth, or pride, or unbelief, something or other in my self, that provoked thy spirit to withdraw, and caused thee to deny that grace, without which I can do nothing. I humbly confess, and heartily lament my walking unsuitably to the vows I formerly made, and the favours which I have heretofore received. I have at this table *sworn* and *not perform’d* ; had *peace spoken*, and yet *return’d again to folly* ; enjoy’d sweet communion with thee, and yet forgotten, neglected, and provok’d thee : and therefore I was justly punished, in my *beloved’s* with-
drawing

^p Psal. li. 4.

^q Matt. xxii. 4.

' *drawing himself ; so that when I sought him, I*
 ' *could not find him, and when I called him, he*
 ' *gave me no answer* : I will therefore ascribe
 ' *righteousness to my maker, I will abhor my self,*
 ' *and repent in dust and ashes.* Lord, forgive
 ' me, that my preparations were so slight,
 ' my self-examination so superficial, my me-
 ' ditations so loose, my prayers so cold, and
 ' my pains in the whole so little : pardon
 ' me, if I omitted *preparatory* duties, or laid
 ' too great stress upon them ; if *sloth* pre-
 ' vail'd with me to neglect them, or *pride*
 ' to trust in them : forgive me, if by eager-
 ' ness in worldly business, excessive indul-
 ' gence of the flesh, in meat or drink,
 ' sleep, or needless recreations, by intempe-
 ' rate passion, or imprudent ordering of af-
 ' fairs, I not only *provok'd* my God, but ac-
 ' tually *indisposed my self* for the holy solem-
 ' nity : or, if I have been guilty of any sin,
 ' that I ha'n't duly repented of ; if I live in
 ' the neglect of any known duty, or under
 ' the power of any unmortify'd lust ; *shew*
 ' *me, I beseech thee, wherefore thou contendest*
 ' *with me ;* humble me deeply, wash me
 ' thoroughly, and pardon me freely, for
 ' Jesus sake. *Amen.*

But, O my soul, tho' there be so great
 reason for humiliation and self-abasement,
 I must not be utterly discouraged, nor re-
 fuse to be comforted.

I must hope, that my heart has been right
 with

with God, and that I have not wilfully prevaricated and trifled with him; therefore several circumstances may be consider'd, to check my fears and mitigate my sorrows.

I do not serve a *hard master*: a kind and gracious God can make *allowances* for that indisposition, which may arise from melancholy, or other bodily disorders; from extraordinary afflictions, violent temptations, &c. He *considers our frame*, and knows that *we are but dust*, and does not expect the same from frail *mortals* as he does from the *Angels* in heaven, and the *spirits of just men made perfect*. That kind expression of my Lord, *the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak**, may be used to comfort real humble christians; tho' it be often abused to harden the slothful and presumptuous formalist.

Let me also consider, that I must not always conclude an *ordinance lost*, where the *affections have not been raised*. There may be *real communion* with God, where there is not a *sensible delight*; the *sacrament* may be bless'd to promote humility, and real holiness; tho' I have wanted sensible meltings, and desired manifestations; yea, it is very possible these may be with-held on a wise design, to carry on the work of God in my own soul, which seems to require a variety of dispensations; as wind and rain, frost and darkness, are in their proper courses equally necessary

* Matt. xxvi. 41.

cessary to the earth, as calm and sun-shine. Hereby, it may be, G O D is teaching me *to live more by faith*, upon the righteousness and fulness of Jesus; to distrust *my self* more, and censure *others* less; to be more *watchful, humble, charitable and compassionate* than ever. I may see cause to bless G O D hereafter for what is so grievous now. I shall never forget that saying of my Lord to Peter; “*what I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know*.”

Besides, I would remember that I *cannot presently judge* of the benefit of an ordinance. That which is *sown in tears* may be *reap'd with joy*; tho' at present there be but small appearance of it: the spiritual medicine may gradually mend my constitution; tho' it don't operate sensibly, or prove an immediate cure.

However, I have been doing my *duty*, and God may accept my *honest intentions*; tho' he don't at present smile upon me and say, “*well done, good and faithful servant*.”

And after all; 'tis some comfort to think that *others have perform'd more acceptably*, and met with *joy and peace in believing*. And I thank God for this sign of grace, that I can rejoice in others being *better, and more favour'd* than my self.

But be things as bad as a guilty conscience, and an accusing enemy represents them; I will bless God, that I have had
grace

grace to *bemoan* my self, lament my folly, and cry to God for mercy, thro' *that blood*, which can atone even for the heinous sin of having interpretatively *counted it an unholy thing*.

And now it remains, that I resolve seriously, in a better strength than my own, to manage better for the time to come. And till an opportunity offers to make a fresh effort, let me walk humbly under a deep sense of my sin; let me be more strict and circumspect in my whole conversation, and live every day under the awe of those *vows of God which are upon me*. In an especial manner let me be careful to *keep my self from mine iniquity* : *that sin to which by my constitution, business, &c. I am most inclined, and with which I am most frequently overtaken*. Let me be peculiarly careful to perform *those duties, to which I find a corrupt heart most averse*. This will be the best way to retrieve the loss I have sustain'd. God forbid, that I should encourage my self in future neglects by any considerations whatsoever : yet I must believe, that *he remembers Christ in the Sacrament to the best purpose, who, under the sense of what he has there profess'd and promised, lives best after it*; being well assured that a holy conversation, upon *gospel* principles and motives, is a better evidence of worthy receiving, than all the transports and ecstasies imaginable. I would
not

not be satisfy'd without being *affected*; but surely the *principal* thing is by so apt a means to be *improv'd* and *better'd*; to grow in *grace* and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ* ^w.

Therefore I must make it my earnest and daily prayer, that God would *blefs* his ordinance to this great end; or else my labour will be lost, and my expectations frustrate.

And Oh! that he would vouchsafe his blessing accordingly! grant, that I may never forget the engagements I am under; but upon every occasion remember that I *am a Christian*, and have solemnly own'd *Christ*; that this thought may be a restraint from *sin*, and a spur to *duty*; an antidote against all the poisonous *suggestions* of the grand enemy of souls; a preservative from the *ill examples* of those *children of disobedience*, in whom he *works*^x; and a cordial under all the *troubles* and *afflictions* of this mortal life. May I find so great benefit by thus waiting upon God, that I may long for the return of such seasons; and by *frequent communion* with saints on earth, be fitted for better company in a better world; when I shall *sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*, in the kingdom of God; yea *be with Christ where he is*, and behold his glory; which is all my salvation, and all my desire. Amen.

^w 2 Pet. iii. 18.

^x Eph. ii. 2.

Sacramental
EXERCISES.

PART II.

Sacramental

EXERCISES

PART II

*The christian's conduct, after the
sacrament of the Lord's-Sup-
per, directed, &c.*

THE INTRODUCTION.

THAT the sacrament of the LORD'S-
supper is a standing ordinance in
the christian church, I shall now
take for granted; my concern not being
at present with *such*, as call it in *question*. I am
applying my self to *those*, who have, with
conscience towards God, attended upon the
solemnity, and are desirous that all the
great ends of it may be answer'd; the sum
of which is the *honour of God*, and the *edifi-
cation of our own souls*. This is what every
serious person proposes *before* his actual par-
ticipation, and is obliged to pursue *after* it.

Of *preparatory* duties *many* have written;
and I have thrown *my* mite into the *common*
treasury. Of a proper behaviour *after* the
sacrament, I would say something by it self:
not as tho' it were a subject *untouch'd*; but as
it may be considered without so much *inter-
fering* with the performances of others; it

not having been so *professedly* and *distinctly* treated of, as those previous dispositions, which ought to be made in order to our being worthy communicants. And besides, I engage in this service with a particular view, hoping to make an advantageous representation of this plain and important truth; *that the right improvement of one communion, is the best preparation for another.*

Partaking of the *Lord's supper* is one of those, which *divines* call *instrumental*, duties; such are all parts of external worship.—Not that they are *merely* so; for they are designed to express our duty to God, and in them we pay a homage to our supreme Lord. So in *eating* and *drinking* the consecrated elements, we *remember Christ*, and *shew forth his death*, and therein do homage to him who is exalted and made Lord of all: we confess that *Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*^a.—Nor are they, properly speaking, *principally* so; for, tho' in our *chief* end, complexly considered, the *glory of God* and *our own salvation* are *inseparable*; yet the *former* is in strict propriety our *ultimate end*, and what is of *prior* consideration to the *other*.—But they are *truly* so, being design'd as means to answer this great end, that we may be *made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light*^b. Particularly the *Lord's supper* is, by all sorts of christian writers,

^a Phil. ii. 11.

^b Colos. i. 12.

writers, represented as conducing to this end. *Worthy receivers are by faith made partakers of Christ's body and blood to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace*, says one ^c Catechism: *our souls are strengthened and refreshed by the body and blood of Christ, as our bodies are by bread and wine*, says ^d another.

Now that this end may be answered, we must take diligent heed to our selves after the solemnity is over, as well as prepare carefully before, and attend closely at the administration: For consider,

1. The sacrament does not operate after the manner of an *amulet*, or *charm*; which are said to effect cures or preserve from dangers by the mere external application; and that even in the case of infants and idiots, who know nothing of the matter:—nor in a *natural* way; as medicines rightly prepared and administered do really heal diseases, whether there be any attention of mind to the operation or not. The effect of *sacraments* is not *ex opere operato*, (as the popish schoolmen barbarously express an absurd or unintelligible notion.) No man can be so weak as to suppose that the soul can receive any moral benefit from the mere eating of bread and wine; for they are (as Mr. *Vines* observes^e) *incommensurate and improper to the soul; and the body may be more easily fed with air, than the soul with bread and wine.*

E 3

Nay,

^c Assembly's.

^d Church of England.

^e p. 41.

Nay, if we allow'd the elements to be *turned into*, or *contain under* them the real body and blood of Christ; for that is the sense (or meaning at least) of those two hard words *Transubstantiation* and *Consubstantiation*, which (as the forementioned author observes^f) have *bred more jars, and cost more blood, since they were born (and neither of them are six hundred years old) than can be well imagin'd*: I say, if the bread and wine were in a *corporal* manner Christ's flesh and blood, the mere taking them into the body could not answer any spiritual saving purposes: for thus our Saviour himself says, *The flesh profiteth nothing*^g.

2. The operation of the sacrament is by way of *moral* instrumentality. It is a means appointed by God for our *edification*, and apparently *fit* and *proper* for that purpose. Under whatever view we consider it, as a memorial, an expression of gratitude, an obligation, oath, or vow; it has a tendency to promote the divine life, and is to be improv'd accordingly; and the success depends upon our attending to it, with serious and diligent application, under the influences of God's holy spirit, whose blessing may be expected upon his own institutions. And,

3. Therefore, after the transaction is over, we must take heed to ourselves, lest we *lose the*

^f p. 8.^g John vi. 63. V. *Whitby* ad loc.

the things which we have wrought. We are not to suppose, that having devoutly received the elements (how strong soever our faith and hope and love were at that time) our concern is over, when the ordinance is ended. 'Tis true, some ends are answered as soon as the ceremony is finished, viz. the solemn renewing of our baptismal covenant, the open profession of Christ, or shewing forth his death, and every thing that may be called *doing our homage* (as far as it is so); these ends, I say, are answered by worthy receivers, before they return from the solemnity. But as it is an *instrumental* duty, they have then only laid a fresh foundation for further work, by putting themselves under strong engagements and receiving great encouragements; and their after-business must be to build a superstructure of holiness and comfort.

C H A P. I.

Of reviewing our behaviour at the Ordinance.

IN order to the *ends* of the sacrament being answered in our advancing in goodness; or, in the apostle's words, *growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*^h, it appears requisite, that we

E 4

should

^h 2 Pet. iii. 18.

should take the first proper opportunity to review our behaviour. It is our duty to *examine* our selves *before* the participation, if we would be worthy *receivers*; and *after* it, if we would *walk* worthily. It may be proper to call our selves to account, whether we allow'd such a proportion of time, as our circumstances would admit, to search our hearts, and try our ways, to humble our souls, and confess our sins, and cry for mercy; to strengthen our faith, confirm our hope, and inflame our love to God and Christ, and one another; to form resolutions, to settle rules for our future conduct, &c: and whether the time we separated to these purposes was faithfully imploy'd according to the design; and what the issue of it was; whether we went forth to the house of God with a seriousness of spirit, and had our minds impress'd with such thoughts as were proper for the occasion.

But especially we should recollect the manner of our behaviour *at* the solemnity; whether an awe of God fell upon us, when we address'd our selves to the service: at least, whether we endeavour'd to *set the Lord before us*, and consider'd, that *all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do*¹; that the secrets of our hearts are as full in his view, as the air of our countenances; and temper of our mind

¹ Heb. iv. 13.

mind as much within his observation, as the posture of our *bodies* : that the omnipresent, omniscient God is also a jealous one ; and that, as he *cannot* be deceiv'd, he *will not* be mocked ; as he cannot be imposed upon, he will not be trifled with ; that he requires the heart, and will accept of nothing without it ; and that nothing external, how laborious or expensive soever, shall be admitted as equivalent to a serious devotion of spirit : that humble gestures, covered faces, uplifted eyes, heaving breasts, and forced tears, are nothing (or worse) without that *inward* temper, which they are design'd to express.

Whether we left the world behind us, when we went up to worship ; at least endeavour'd to bar our hearts against the intrusion of every thing foreign and impertinent to the purpose before us ; especially guarding against sinful imaginations, and the workings of a vain, proud, sensual, covetous, and revengeful spirit.

Whether we had our hearts in some good measure fix'd and attentive to the important business we were engaged in ; and set ourselves to check their unseasonable wanderings and improper excursions. If we did (in the old *sacrificial* phrase) *hoc agere*, mind what we were about ; or, according to the ecclesiastical *formula*, *sursum corda*, lift up our hearts in the service.

Whether we were suitably affected with what we saw and heard, and were duly impress'd with the various thoughts which pass'd through our minds. Whether our *faith* was in vigorous exercise, and we found ourselves firmly persuaded of the truth of those things, which were represented or shewed forth to us in the *ordinance*; particularly, that *Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures*^k, shewing forth Christ's death being one great end of the institution. Whether, while we *mused, the fire burned*: If our hearts *burned within us*, while we beheld the memorial of his broken body, and the representation of *that* blood, which was shed for the remission of our sins. If it excited our love to him, when we beheld how he loved us. Whether we mourned over him whom our sins had pierced; loath'd ourselves for our abominations; wish'd we had been suffering any thing, rather than sinning against God; and resolved by his grace, that we would be at an eternal distance with that accursed thing which created this tragedy. Whether we heartily *accepted* Christ to the ends for which God exalted him, namely, *to be a prince and a saviour, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins*^l, and vow'd in a better strength than our own, that we would follow him wherever he should lead us, and go wherever he should

^k 1 Cor. xv. 3.^l Acts v. 31.

send us. Whether we heartily *resign'd* ourselves to the conduct of divine providence, protesting that we would take every thing kindly, which our Lord should order as to our circumstances in life ; and be ready to die and go hence when he should call us ; and that in the mean time our whole *spirit, soul and body*, all our powers, possessions and interests, to the utmost extent of our influence, should be at his service, and devoted to his glory. Whether we entertain'd a comfortable *hope* of mercy, and could in any good measure rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. In a word, whether we experienced the workings of *gratitude* to God for his inestimable love ; and of a right and *charitable* spirit towards even strangers and enemies, but especially towards all *the household of faith*, wherever scatter'd, and however distinguished ; all such, of what party or denomination soever, as *love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity*^m ; and so have an interest in the common salvationⁿ.

^m Eph. vi. 24.

ⁿ Jude ver. 3.

C H A P. II.

Concerning our duty; if upon examination we find, our attendance has been, in the main, regular.

IF by G O D's blessing we find reason to conclude, that our *behaviour* has been *right*, and our *conduct* such, as a well-instructed conscience approves, in the general, and with proper allowances, our *duty* appears to be as follows.

I. We must *bleſs* G O D. Surely christians need not be reason'd with to make them sensible, that *every good gift, and every perfect gift is from G O D*°; and that he *worketh in us both to will and to do*°: that it is true as to the *spiritual*, as well as *natural life*, that *in him we live and move, and his are all our ways*. The *habits* of grace are from him, and the *exercise* of them are under his direction and influence. This we *confess* in our *prayers*, and should also *own* in our *praises*: for nothing can be more unaccountable than to expect from G O D, and ascribe to self. If he gave the holy spirit at our asking, is he not to be praised by such as receive it? He has not been under the influences of the divine spirit at the Lord's table, who is not ready to say, *Blessed be G O D, even the Father*
of

of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with spiritual blessings, &c.¹. He, whose heart has been fixed, will sing and give praise. The words of David, upon another solemn occasion, are very proper upon this ; now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort ?

To quicken our thankfulness, we may do well to call to mind, if it have not often been otherwise with us ; such of us especially as have been *communicants* many years, who have been long planted in the house of the Lord, and appear'd to flourish in the courts of our God, may well remember the different seasons which have passed over us. We have oftentimes been disappointed in our expectations. We have gone out full of hopes, and returned empty of comfort, and have had reason to apply to our selves in a spiritual sense that of the prophet ; *they returned with their vessels empty, they were ashamed and cover'd their heads².*

Thro' the prevalence of an *evil heart* of unbelief, the importunate solicitations of the world, and the suggestions of our indefatigable adversary, has it not often happened to us, *as when a hungry man dreameth, and behold he eateth ; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty ? or, as when a thirsty man dreameth, and behold he drinketh ;*

¹ Eph. i. 3. ² 1 Chr. xxix. 13, 14. ³ Jer. xiv. 3.

drinketh; but he awaketh, and behold he is faint, and his soul hath appetite? The bread we expected has been as a stone; our wine mix'd with water; yea, that which should have been a cup of blessing, has been like that which they offered our Saviour, and he would not drink, vinegar mingled with gall^u. This thought should warm our hearts into thankful acknowledgments, if we have sat under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit has been sweet to our taste: if we have tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious: if in the holy ordinance God has remembered us, with the love which he bears to his own, and visited us with his salvation. In a word, we should conclude our review, as we did the solemnity itself, with a hymn of praise, an hallelujah, in such words as the psalmist uses; Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name: bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits^w.

2. We must pray and endeavour, that the impressions we have received may abide; that they may not be as the morning-cloud and early dew, which goeth away; like a small shower, which sprinkleth the thirsty earth, and drying away in a little while, leaves the grass more parched than it was before. Such a request David added to his thanksgivings aforementioned; O Lord, keep this for ever in the imagination^x.

^u Isa. xxix. 8.
ad init.

^w Matt. xxvii. 34.

^x Psal. ciii.

imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare (or, as it is in the margin, and may properly be read, stabliss) their hearts unto thee^{*}. We should earnestly beseech God, that we may bear in mind what pass'd at the awful solemnity; that what we saw, and felt, and heard, and vow'd, may not be forgotten, or remembered as waters that pass away; but may possess our souls, and be *as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies*[†]: that as God satisfy'd our mouth with good things, when he made unto his people a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined[‡], we may not soon lose the relish of those royal dainties, which his table yielded. The murmuring *Israelites* could long retain the savour of the *fleshpots of Egypt*, and remember'd *the fish they did eat in Egypt freely, the cucumbers and melons, and the leeks and the onions and the garlick*[§]; and shall not the *Israel of God*, the true circumcision, remember the heavenly manna, they tasted at that table which he spread for them in the wilderness? Let us not easily forget with what peculiar satisfaction we fed on him, whose *flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed*: for this purpose let us bow our knees to the father of our Lord Jesus Christ^{||}.

And

^{*} 1 Chr. xxix. 18. [†] Eccles. xii. 11. [‡] Isai. xxv. 6. [§] Num. xi. 5. ^{||} Eph. iii. 14.

And to our prayers we must join answerable *endeavours*; otherwise we mock God, and deceive our selves: we must *guard* against every thing which tends to wear off the impressions we have received, or lessen their force. Whatever care we take (such is the frailty of our nature) the glory which we saw, and the sweetness which we tasted, while the *king sat at his table*, will abate in a very great proportion: and for this reason God has mercifully provided for the renewing of our agreeable and useful sensations, by the frequent return of the day of our festival solemnities: however, it concerns us to watch against every thing, that may obliterate the impressions, which the sight of a *crucified* Jesus, and the believing views of a *glorified* and *shortly to be revealed* one, left upon us.

Particularly, we must watch against every *wilful sin*: this is of principal importance in the case. Any one wilful, especially gross sin, will efface the deepest and strongest impressions, which the ordinance has made: the case will be, as when a man has been taking a great deal of pains to kindle ill-disposed materials into a flame, and then throws water upon it when he has done; his labour is lost, and the work grows more difficult. By wilful sin the *spirit* is *quenched*°, i. e. as to his operations, in the same manner,

ner, as he is said to be *grieved*^d. Upon this account *David*, after he had committed those aggravated abominations of murder and adultery, had a great deal of reason to pray, *take not thy holy spirit from me*^e: and crimes of a great deal *lighter dye* will in their proportion have the same effect; especially if they are committed not only against full light and certain knowledge, but against the actual remonstrances of a faithful conscience. Or, if matters do not go that *dreadful* length, (as it may be hoped they seldom do) yet if for want of watchfulness and sobriety of mind we are overtaken with any grosser fault, the consequence will be very unhappy, and we may expect damage as to peace or tenderness of our conscience; and that, instead of that disposition to communion with God, which we brought away from the regularly-attended ordinance, there will arise a sort of shyness and estrangement betwixt us and him whom our souls love. We shall lose our *confidence towards* God, and he will hide his face from us: ‘*He will act towards us, as*
‘*men are wont to do, when they are grieved*
‘*by us, and displeased at us, withdrawing*
‘*their wonted kindness, flying our company,*
‘*and abandoning us to our enemies*^f:’ and we shall be apt to carry *towards him*, as we are used to do unto a friend, whom we have injuriously treated, and inexcusably affronted,

^d Eph. iv. 30.
 Eph. iv. 30.

^e Psal. li. 11.

^f V. Whitby in

fronted, shun his presence, and avoid his conversation.

We ought also to watch against an *inordinate* attention to the things of this *world*. Circumstances at present will not allow us always to dwell in God's house; after a short stay we must come down from the mount, and our delightful converse with God must be interrupted by the moderate cares, business, and diversions of life: but if we would not *lose the things which we have wrought*, we must see that our regard to common affairs be kept within the bounds of moderation. Carking *cares* will sour and contract our minds, and *eat as doth a canker*: multiplicity of *business* (when we are not clearly obliged to it) will distract us, and hinder those reflections, which must at proper intervals be made use of, as means to keep alive the holy flame, which our musings kindled at the blessed solemnity: while we are careful about many things, it will be hard to do any thing well, and it is odds but the *one thing needful* will be the most neglected. The same or greater need there is, that we set proper bounds to the *diversions* and amusements of life. Excessive mirth, protracted feasts, and exorbitant play will carnalize our frame, and by habitual indulgence produce the same effect, as things in themselves more criminal; and in some respects are more dangerous, as they steal upon us insensibly,

sibly, and are not so shocking in the review as more flagrant crimes are ; into which also they too often lead us, e're we are aware. Nay, the *amusements of learning* itself, how refined and abstracted soever they are, if pursued with too much eagerness, and without due rest and pauses, may rob us of our treasure, and as effectually put us out of the temper we ought to maintain, as even sensual excesses themselves. I appeal for the truth of this not only to such as delight in mathematicks, history, and poetry ; but even those, who are engaged in controversial studies, tho' the subject be divine, and the speculation most sublime. All these things, if inordinately prosecuted, come within the reach of that prohibition ; *love not the world, neither the things that are in the world : if any man love the world, the love of the father is not in him*^g.

We must also be upon our guard against excess of *worldly sorrow* : of this the apostle saith, that it *worketh death*^h. The expression is, no doubt, to be understood of death in the *literal* sense : but it is also true, that an inordinate indulgence to it is very prejudicial to the interest of the *divine life* in the soul : this sorrow evidently proceeds from too great a fondness for temporal things ; and as evidently tends to abate the sense and relish of divine things, which ought to be

^g 1 John ii. 15.

^h 2 Cor. vii. 10.

be preserved upon the mind ; and for the maintaining of which in its proper vigour, we make use of the sacrament of the Lord's-supper as a choice and special means.

I confess, afflictions are designed and suited to do us good, and promote our most valuable interests. *By the sadness of the countenance the heart is made betterⁱ : whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth ; and it is for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness ; and it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby^k :* and it is acknowledged that a degree of sorrow, when we are under the corrections of our heavenly father, is natural and very becoming his children : but still there may be an excess, which is a fault, and produces ill effects ; particularly *this*, that it abates the spirituality of our temper, which is the desired and agreeable result of our well-regulated devotions. Men may prejudice themselves by carrying their worldly sorrows too high, as well as by intemperance in their joys. As our *prosperity* hurts us, when it dilates the heart unreasonably ; so does our *adversity*, when it sinks us beyond measure. Affliction never has its kindly effect, but when we are in a meek, resigned, and heavenly frame ; to which such degrees of worldly sorrow, as I have been cautioning against, are by no means friendly.

3. If

ⁱ Ecclef. vii. 3.

^k Heb. xii. 6, 10, 11.

3. If our attendance upon the ordinance hath been well managed, and produced the present desired effect, it is fit we should consider very seriously, that we ought not to lay too *great a stress* upon the *good frame* we find our selves in. This may prove a snare to us: for tho' it be a very desirable thing to have our hearts warmed, and our affections raised by the steady contemplation of divine things, when they are offered to our minds under an advantageous representation; yet we must not rest in this, as if all the ends of communicating were answered. The reason of this appears from what has been hinted before, concerning the sacrament's being an *instrumental* duty: it is designed to help us in the more proper and effectual discharge of all those things, to which the profession of christianity obligeth us: and it is obvious to any common understanding, that fitting our selves for our work, is a distinct thing from the actual performing of it. This *spiritual repast* is designed to strengthen us for the way and work which are before us; and we all know, that tho' our food be ever so good, and we eat it with ever so much pleasure, and feel the chearing and strengthening effects of it in the best manner one would wish; yet if in the strength of it we do not go forward in our journey, or apply diligently to our business, we are far from answering the end of our refreshments: yea, our loitering and neglect
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of business is by this means an offence of greater aggravation.—Therefore,

4. We must be sure to *improve* all the spiritual refreshment we got at the Lord's table to the *great purposes of life*. The end, which every man ought to propose in living, and which at this sacrament we openly engage ourselves to pursue, is to glorify and please the great God, by doing his will, and so to work out our own salvation: let every communicant therefore be duly apprized, that whatever emotions he may feel at the ordinance, his labour is lost, and in some respects worse than lost, if the interest of inward holiness and practical godliness be not served by it: our coming together is not for the better, if it do not make us so; and that, both in the temper of our mind, and the course of our conversation.

(1.) In the *temper of our mind*. The end of *all ordinances*, and particularly of *this* most solemn one, is to make the heart better. While men are absolutely in an unregenerate state, the inward part, the hidden man, is altogether overspread with darkness, covered with confusion, and in a most wild disorder: their reason either lies asleep, or is misled by false appearances and unhappy prejudices: their passions are strong and turbulent, and their case is aptly described by the prophet under the metaphor of a *troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt*¹.

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¹ Isa. lvii. 20.

The spirit of God makes a *change* in those who are *born again*; a change which is indeed happy and amazing; they are in a good measure the reverse of what they were; reason resumes its empire, and the tumultuous passions subside; they come to themselves, and are in a right mind after a sad state of distraction; they think right and project well, and behave with a visible sobriety. This change is expressed by a great variety of *metaphors* in scripture, which strike every attentive mind so strongly, that they are easily recollected: but still the good work is *only begun*, when we are *first* born of God; it must be *carried on* gradually to perfection: We are compared to *new-born babes*, and are to attend the *word* (under which gospel-ordinances are comprehended) *that we may grow thereby*^m: *till we come to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*ⁿ: We must therefore consider seriously, that the end of our taking this spiritual nourishment is our growth in grace.

We are not to be satisfied, how well soever we seem to perform at the holy solemnity, unless we find a growing conformity to Christ our head; that we become more like him, and have more of that *mind in us which was in Christ Jesus*^o; this is meant by *putting on the Lord Jesus Christ*, as it stands opposed to *making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the*
lusts

^m 1 Pet. ii. 2.ⁿ Eph. iv. 13.^o Philip. ii. 5.

lusts thereof^p : this is *putting on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness*^q. We must, if we would approve our selves worthy communicants, aim vehemently and press earnestly after that perfection, of which the holy Jesus is the high *exemplar*, or complete pattern. Let the words and example of him, who was so close a follower of Christ, dwell much upon our minds : *Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended ; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark*^r, &c. to this purpose I shall apply those words of the same apostle ; *having these promises* (which are represented, sealed, and applied to believers in the Lord's-supper) *let us cleanse our selves from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord*^s. Let us see that our *faith* grow exceedingly, and that, by the help of such apt means, that which is *lacking in it be perfected* ; that we be *strong in faith*, giving glory to God ; that we *abound in hope thro' the power of the Holy Ghost* ; that we make a discernible progress in that *more excellent way of charity*, which is the spring and sum of all our duty both towards God and man ; that we advance in *purity of heart*, in opposition to all sensual defilements, and those *fleshy lusts*,
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^p Rom. xiii. 14. ^q Eph. iv. 24. ^r Philip. iii.
13, 14. ^s 2 Cor. vii. 1.

which war against the soul; that patience have its perfect work, which is a branch of that humility, which is of the greatest consequence to secure his favour, who has told us, that he resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble: in a word, that we grow up into him in all things, who is the head, even Christ."

(2.) In the course of our conversation; this is the proof of the former, as the effect is of the cause: a better life is a proper evidence of a better heart. This therefore we must see to; that in our whole conduct our *profiting* by the holy ordinance may abundantly appear: — that we may be more strictly *just*, and more diffusively *good* (in that sense in which the apostle uses the word; *peradventure for a good man one would even dare to die*:") — that as we profess to bear Christ's image, and improve in it, we follow his example more exactly, who went about doing good; so far, that our zeal may provoke others: — that we be more *meek* and *lowly* in our behaviour towards our neighbour, and appear more remarkably in the ornament of a *quiet spirit*: — that we be better in every *relation*, and fill up the place, in which providence has set us, with greater exactness and decorum: — that we be better husbands, wives, parents, children, magistrates, ministers, masters, servants, &c. — that we shew a greater government over our appetites,

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passions,

passions, and tongues ; and in the comprehensive words of the apostle, live more soberly, righteously, and godly in *this present world*²: —that we shew forth the effect this appointed means has on us, by our being purged, so as to *bring forth more fruit*¹ ; and being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Christ Jesus to the praise and glory of God² : in a word ; that as we have received, how we ought to walk, and to please God, we may abound more and more². This is that ordering the conversation aright, to which the promise is made of seeing the salvation of God¹ : that work of the Lord, in which if we always abound, our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord².

I have hinted already, and it is fit that it be distinctly represented, that to all this we oblige ourselves at the Lord's table in the most solemn manner : we then bind our souls with an oath, and come under a vow, to do our utmost, that we may increase in holiness, and persevere in it to the end. And need I prove, that how grave and serious and affected soever we be at the awful ceremony, the end is not answer'd, unless we be true to our oath and solemn engagement ? Let us remember the words of the wise man, which are applicable to the present purpose ; *when thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay*

¹ Tit. ii. 12. ² John xv. 2. ³ Philip. i. 11.
⁴ 1 Thess. iv. 1. ⁵ Ps. l. 23. ⁶ 1 Cor. xv. ult.

pay it : for he hath no pleasure in fools ; pay that which thou hast vowed^d. The representation, which is made of Christ's body and blood in the sacrament, is designed to draw forth our hatred against sin, under the imputation of which he suffered, and to excite us to effectual purposes against it ; and at the same time to engage our resolutions to express our love to him, who loved us, and gave himself for us, in doing whatsoever he commands us. This we acknowledge to be our reasonable service ; this we purpose, promise and vow, when we feast upon the memorials of his sacrifice : and this we must perform, or else we give the sacrifice of fools^e.

Let it be also considered, that as we lay ourselves under obligations, so we profess our expectation of God's spirit and grace to help us, that this great end may be attained, and indeed our expectations are well grounded, even upon a sure word of promise, that *our heavenly father will give the holy spirit to them that ask him^f* : now most certainly a promise of assistance enforces an obligation. If God has appointed the ordinance, as a means to this end, and has promised his grace, if duly applied to, for the effecting it, surely we are obliged to pursue it with all possible application and perseverance. Thus much is plainly declared in that of the apostle ; *work out your own salvation, for it is God that*

worketh

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^d Eccles. v. 4.

^e Eccles. v. 1.

^f Luke xi. 13.

worketh in you both to will and to do according to his good pleasure^s.

Thus I have shewed what is our duty, if our attendance upon the sacrament has been in any good degree regular and comfortable: what our conduct must be, if it has been otherwise, falls next under consideration.

C H A P. III.

Shewing what is our duty, if our behaviour at the Lord's table hath been very irregular or uncomfortable.

IF upon reflection we find, that we have been more than ordinarily indisposed at the blessed ordinance; if our *faith* has been weak, our *thoughts* distracted, our *hearts* cold, and our *adversary* prevalent; our duty may be represented under the following particulars.

1. Let us be *humbled in our souls before God*. If our disappointment was the effect of bodily indisposition, or some sore affliction in our family, and we forced ourselves to the Lord's table, to shew our regard to the ordinance, and with hope of finding relief; we are even in this case to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, and be
duly

duly sensible of the righteousness of his proceedings, confessing that we deserve every rebuke he is pleased to direct: however, *this* should be considered as *an affliction*, which we ought to bear with patience; and endeavour to comfort ourselves, that we have not to do with a rigorous judge, but a compassionate father, who *knoweth our frame, and remembreth we are dust*.

But I suppose conscience justly charging our disappointment upon *our misconduct*: then we ought to take *shame* to ourselves, and *sorrow after a godly sort*, for that sloth, sensuality, or worldly-mindedness, which hindered our regular preparations; or that pride and self-conceit which made us lay too great a stress upon them; or whatever corrupt affections hindered our devotion at the communion, and gave Satan an advantage over us. If we encourage conscience to be faithful, we shall, without need of a divine revelation, be able to find out the accursed thing, to which God's withdrawing himself from us is to be imputed; to what it is owing, that we did not find him whom our souls love, nor *see his power and his glory, as we have seen it in the sanctuary*. And upon consideration of the whole matter, as conscience regulated by the word of God shall represent it, let us be suitably affected, abhorring ourselves, and expressing our concern in proper tokens of humiliation; as

Ezra (in another case) fell upon his knees, and spread out his hands to the Lord his G o d, and said, *O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee my God^b*; confessing and bewailing our sins *in general*, and that corruption *particularly*, to which we apprehend our mismanagement and disappointment is principally owing.

And, if our repentance be sincere and hearty, we have no reason to doubt of obtaining mercy through *that* blood, which *cleanseth from all sin*. For this we must pray earnestly; and to quicken our applications to the throne of grace, let us consider, that no small guilt is contracted by our misbehaviour at the Lord's table. I would watch against saying any thing to grieve a tender spirit, and have intimated the allowances God will make in case of bodily disorder, and lamented infirmities, &c. but surely it is no light thing to be *guilty of the body and blood of the Lordⁱ*; and yet so they are, who *eat the bread, and drink the cup, unworthily*; such are said to eat and drink *damnation or judgment to themselves*. And how much sorer these passages, which sound so terribly, may be softened by attending to the import of the original words, and scope of the context; yet no room can be left after all to doubt, that a good man may be very guilty in this matter; and when he stands

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^b *Ezra ix. 5, 6.*

ⁱ *1 Cor. xi. 27.*

convicted by his own conscience of inexcusable neglect, ought to beg forgiveness in this case, in the same manner as he uses to do upon occasion of any of the grosser follies of his life. And tho' I would not intimate it to be the sense of that text, *Heb. x. 29.* which certainly speaks of final apostasy; yet a serious mind will not scruple to charge himself with some share in the guilt of having *trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and done despite to the spirit of grace;* and will even apply to his own case that prayer in the penitential psalm, *Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness* *. However, it is certainly fit, that upon such occasions we should confess our fault, own our demerit, deprecate the divine displeasure, and resolve by God's grace to take more heed for the time to come; that we engage in awful solemnities with a more suitable frame of spirit, and decency of *inward* as well as *outward* behaviour.

2. Let us *use proper methods to retrieve our fault*, as much as may be, and the damage we have sustained by unworthy receiving: and this is to be attempted,

[1.] Not merely by waiting the return of another opportunity. Indeed, we are

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with

* Ps. li. 14.

with full purpose of heart to promise, that, if God shall bring us to his table again, we will endeavour to behave better; but this is far from being sufficient. It will not satisfy a well-directed conscience, but leave us under an uneasy regret for having lost a prize which was put into our hands, and that perhaps irretrievably; for as what is pass'd cannot be recall'd, so we may not live to see the dawn of another day of the Son of man, or have another opportunity of rectifying what was amiss in our former management by our future care. But,

[2.] By diligent application to the duties, which are statedly subsequent to a communion. If we have not succeeded as we ought, desired, and expected, the concern about our miscarriage should quicken us to the more care and pains in those duties, which are to be attended to, in pursuance of the great end of communicating, whatever our frame has been at the time of it. The end of this ordinance is certainly our *increase in holiness*; there we see the most powerful *motives* to it, represented in the most moving manner; there we lay ourselves under the strongest *obligations*, and receive the greatest *encouragements*; and our business is to take care, that our conduct be regulated accordingly in the whole of our behaviour towards God and man: the particulars of which are obvious to a willing
and

and serious mind, and have been represented in their proper place.

I shall only remark under this head, that tho' our doubling our diligence in after-duties is not a proper atonement for our culpable neglects at the time of participation; yet it is what we *ought* to do, and is the best thing we *can* do; and the wonderful grace of God may order the matter so, as to bring good out of this evil; and we may hope will do it, if our repentance be express'd in more close reflections, serious resolutions, strict watchfulness, and earnest prayers, upon the account of the omissions and miscarriages we bewail. And tho' no wise man would chuse to sleep beyond his hour, or stumble in his way, 'tis no uncommon thing for after-diligence to retrieve it, and make even the misfortune turn to account.

C H A P. IV.

Recommending the frequent recollection of what pass'd at the sacrament, in order to our spiritual improvement.

HITHERTO I have been representing what I apprehend, in the main, (and making proper allowances) to be the

communicant's *duty*, in order to the improvement of the life of God in his soul, by the ordinance of the Holy Supper. I come now to propose something merely by way of *advice*; concerning the expediency of which, I leave every man, who has a taste of devotion, to determine for himself. What I aim at, is, that we set the solemnity before us in our daily walk or conversation, *after* our first serious recollections and reflections are over. However our management and success appears to have been upon a serious enquiry, it may be proper *daily* to lead back our thoughts to what pass'd between God and our souls at *the great solemnity*; and this both *statedly* in our retirements for devotion; and *occasionally* in the *leisure* of our thoughts, or upon any extraordinary emergency.

i. Statedly in our *retirements* for the worship of God. When we *enter into our closet*, according to the command of our Lord¹; for those exercises of devotion in which the pleasure of a christian's life so much consists, and which contribute so much to his fitness for the service of God, in the place where providence has set him: when, I say, we retire to converse with heaven, can any thing be more proper than to reflect upon *the solemnities* we *lately* attended? and may it not be expected to put our spirits into a proper

¹ Matt. vi. 6.

proper frame for the devotions upon which we are entering? Confession, humiliation, prayer, and praise, are the employments of the sacred season; the time we allot for secret worship, and recollecting the view, which we had of Christ *at his table*, can hardly fail (by the blessing of God) to dispose us for every part of the *closet-service*. If we carry a *crucified* Jesus in our minds, as we had him set before us at the ordinance; with what brokenness of heart, for instance, shall we confess and bewail those transgressions for which he was *wounded*, and those iniquities for which he was *bruised* ^m? When we look upon him whom *we have pierced*, shall we not be disposed to *mourn as one mourneth for his only son, and be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born* ⁿ? At the table of the Lord we see the *evil* of *sin* represented in the strongest colours, and in a manner most suited to affect: we see it, as it were, in its full triumph, delivering over the *blessed body* of the Son of God to wounds, torture, and death, and throwing such a dreadful gloom over his *holy soul*, as would have eternally confounded an angel of light; for it made him, whom all the angels of God worship, cry out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* And generally we are in a peculiar manner affected with what is there so

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repre-

^m Isa. liii. 5.ⁿ Zech. xii. 10.

represented: our hearts being warmed beforehand by reading books of devotion, by close meditation, abstraction from objects of sense, and matters of a lower nature, and especially by the influences of the Holy Spirit, given in answer to prayers made with more than ordinary frequency and fervour. Now it is known, that strong and deep impressions, not only last long, but are more easily revived, when the mind exerts itself upon a proper occasion; this may be observed in *common* cases: what a fund of joy or sorrow has that person at hand, who has had his mind wrought up into any great degree of sensibility upon any *extraordinary* adventure? this observation may be applied to matters of a *spiritual* nature; and will be an argument, why we should set the sufferings of Christ before us (as we have seen them represented in the sanctuary) in the rest of our exercises of devotion, as well as in the acts of repentance and mortification: the life of prayer and praise is the acting of faith, hope, love, joy, and gratitude; and how the mind will be raised into such sentiments by recollecting what we saw, felt, and tasted, when all these graces were in their highest exercise upon the most solemn occasion, I need not more particularly represent; I only advise to make the *experiment*, and let the *event* speak.

I shall

I shall only observe farther, what use this may be of to *fix a wandering* mind. In some constitutions the imagination will have a scene, and can hardly be kept from roving, like the *fool's eye, to the ends of the earth* °; this many know to the vexation of their souls: and how far its being possess'd with the images of this great solemnity, as connected with the cross and throne of him *who was dead, and is alive, and lives and reigns for evermore*, may be of service in such a case, I only offer to consideration.

2. In the *leisure* of our thoughts, and *intervals* of business, it may also be very proper to turn our minds towards this *great solemnity* of our religion, and reflect upon what passed on that occasion; particularly, when we *last* remembred the author of it, shewed forth his death, profess'd our relation to him, and made our vows. Whatever our stated business is, it must have intervals; and the mind, as well as body, must relax: and, how pleasant soever it be, human nature generally requires diversion and amusement. In this, perhaps, earth differs from heaven; and if there are people of a different make, I have no concern with them, but only to congratulate their happiness. The generality of christians will, I believe, acknowledge the case to be as I have represented it: and seeing the mind will be *al-*
ways

ways busy (tho' it cannot be *always intent*) may not some of its leisure thoughts be thus directed? I am not excluding a thousand innocent objects, which are not directly spiritual; but advising to give our thoughts about them a *religious cast* (may I call it?) or *spiritual tincture*, by throwing in something divine *en passant*, transiently, and in a secret manner not to be observed. And what *so proper* to this purpose, as the *idea* of him, who so lately entertained us at his table, and gave us his presence to make the *royal dainties* incomparably delicious? If any of us had been thus honoured by an earthly prince, it would possess our minds, and hang upon our imagination, perhaps more than a wise man would wish. If in the *present* case we were thus affected, would it not be with *good reason*, and might it not answer a *good end*? the frequent bearing our minds towards these objects, would *prevent* a great many *silly* thoughts, and *keep out* a great many *evil* ones; would help to poize and balance our minds, and preserve us from being overfet with disagreeable occurrences, or carried away with unreasonable transports, when we meet with such as are more pleasing.

And as this *would be useful*, it is certainly *practicable*. There is nothing necessary to it, but that *spiritual-mindedness*, which is the beauty, strength, and even life of christianity;

stianity; as they very well know, who *savour the things of God*, and have their senses exercised^p; who know what it is to have their hearts where their treasures are; to seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God; to have Christ dwell in their hearts by faith; and their conversation in heaven, in opposition to those nominal professors, who only mind earthly things: such as understand what they read; Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord^q. The devout Jews, who were under a darker dispensation, which had only a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things^r, knew what it was to lay up the words of God in their heart, and in their soul, to bind them as a sign upon their hand, and a frontlet between their eyes; and what they were to teach their children, undoubtedly they thought of themselves, when they sat in the house, and when they walked by the way, when they lay down, and when they rose up^s: and surely, as we have greater advantages, we are under stronger obligations to this purpose: and when we read of their vehement affection for the tabernacles, courts, and altar of God; and how their hearts were in the ways which lead thither, which is express'd by their souls longing and fainting, and

^p Heb. v. 14.^q Philip. iii. 8.^r Heb. x. 1.^s Deut. xi. 18, 19.

and *their heart and flesh crying out*, &c. it may lead us to consider, that as Christ exhibited in the *highest* gospel-solemnity, challenges such a regard from us; so it is a *forcible* thing to be under the daily influence of the memorials of *that body and blood of his*, which is incomparably more valuable than all the *service of the temple*, as being *typified* by it, and the *end* of it.

In short, *knowledge is easy to him that understandeth*: an experienced christian will easily take in what I aim at; and the matter is not hard to explain to others, who understand the *nature of man*, tho' they may be strangers to *vital religion*, and the power of godliness. Suppose a man's heart vehemently set upon a wordly object, the thing he loves will be continually bearing upon his mind, and following him into business, diversion and company, as well as soliciting his thoughts in secrecy and retirement; and that without prejudicing his management of other affairs; nay, on the contrary, will quicken his motions, and brighten his conduct, in a manner, which his acquaintance may easily observe. I could give instances, and quote authors, to this purpose. I shall only transcribe a passage out of a *writer*, whose skill in philosophy, and acquaintance with human nature, I admire, (tho' I can by no means acquiesce in his account of christianity;) his words are these:

‘ In

' In all which things (*viz.* innocent diver-
 ' tisements) we are not to forget GOD (in
 ' whom we both live and are moved, *Acts*
 ' xvii. 20.) as not to have always some
 ' secret reserve to him, and sense of his
 ' fear and presence; which also frequently
 ' exerts itself in the midst of these things
 ' by some short aspirations and breathings:
 ' and that this may neither seem strange
 ' nor troublesome, I shall clear it by one
 ' manifest instance, answerable to the ex-
 ' perience of all men. It will not be de-
 ' nied, that men ought to be more in the
 ' love of GOD, than of any other thing.
 ' Now it is plain, that men that are taken
 ' with love, whether it be of women, or
 ' any other thing, if it hath taken a deep
 ' place in the heart, and possess the mind,
 ' it will be hard for the man so in love, to
 ' drive out of his mind the person or thing
 ' so loved; yea, in his eating, drinking,
 ' or sleeping, his mind will always have a
 ' tendency that way; and in business or
 ' recreations, however intent he may be,
 ' there will be but a very short time per-
 ' mitted to pass, but the mind will let some
 ' ejaculations forth towards its beloved,
 &c. *

I shall only add, if *wicked* men allow
 themselves to repeat past sins in their ima-
 gination; and *worldly-minded* people give up
 so

so many of their thoughts to romantic schemes, and are so often calling back former times and past occurrences, and herein act according to the *genius* and temper of a fleshly mind; it cannot be thought *improper* for those, who are *born of the spirit*, and have at the Lord's table *tasted and seen that he is gracious*, to admit, indulge, and frequently call up the remembrance of such solemnities, in which *GOD* was pleased to make his glorious grace pass before them. *Christ's flesh is meat indeed*, and *his blood is drink indeed*; and by a frequent remembrance how we fed on him at his table (if we do it in a serious believing manner) our souls will have (in this, as it were, rumination) a great help to their growth in grace, and increasing *with all the increase of God*¹.

3. Upon any *extraordinary emergency*, it might be advisable to recollect the solemnities of a preceding communion.

If any sore *affliction* befalls us, we may very properly think of *him*, whose death we lately shewed forth; what great things he suffered, and how meekly and patiently he *humiliated himself*, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; and that, tho' he was a son, yet he *learned obedience by the things which he suffered*; how, for the joy that was set before him, he *endured the cross and despised the shame*, &c. and that he has left us
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¹ Colos. ii. 19.

an example, that we should follow his steps. Let us remember, that he bears a sympathising mind, having himself suffered; and in virtue of the sacrifice he offered on the cross, he is our powerful intercessor, that we may have timely help and proper supports; remembering also, that this he promised at the table, where he sealed to us, as well as we to him; and by these thoughts encourage our addresses to him, who, as he is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, and comforteth his people in all their tribulation".

If the great adversary assaults us; let us look unto Jesus, whom we have seen set forth as crucified: let us call to mind and plead it with him, that he was manifested to destroy the works of the devil; and that, having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them on his cross". Let us remember how, when Satan desired to have Peter, that he might sift him as wheat, he prayed for the disciple, that his faith might not fail; and how by a look his Saviour recovered him out of the snare of the devil—and let us humbly urge, that as Jesus is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, and his grace and power never the less for his being removed and exalted; so he gave us encouragement at his table to expect

* 2 Cor. i. 3, 4.

* Col. ii. 15.

expect his presence in the combat, and his assistance when most sore beset.

If we find *corruption* working; let us recollect the views we had of the evil of sin in the sufferings of our Lord, and remember, that *our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, and that henceforth we might not serve sin*^x; calling to mind that of the Apostle; *forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh, hath ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh, to the lusts of the flesh, but to the will of God*^y: let us consider, that *we are planted in the likeness of his death*: especially, let us have recourse to the representations and transactions, which pass'd at the ordinance; when that, which may be considered as *our iniquity*, gives us trouble. We must *look to a crucified Jesus*, if we would *lay aside the sin which easily besets us*^z: and in short, whatever duty requires self-denial, will never be performed kindly and pleasantly, without *considering him*^a, not only as having given us an *example* upon the cross; but as having *sealed* at his table the *promise*, both of assistance and reward according to the gospel; the promises whereof, or (which is the same thing) the blessings of the new cove-

^x Rom. vi. 6. ^y 1 Pet. iv. 1, 2. ^z Heb. xii. 1.
^a Ver. 3.

covenant, this ordinance *applies* and *seals*, as well as *represents*. It cannot be doubted, that a distinct review of our covenant is proper, when we are to perform any part of duty, which requires application and resolution: this is the most likely method to raise in us such sentiments, as will quicken our motions, and invigorate our whole man, enlarge our hearts, and make us go on with pleasure in the duties of our holy calling; thus may we *mount up with wings as eagles, run and not be weary, walk and not faint*^b.

C H A P. V.

Representing the advantages, which will arise from the practice, which has been recommended; particularly in relation to succeeding opportunities, &c.

THE benefit of conducting ourselves, as hath been directed, after our having received the communion, may be represented in a twofold view; as it respects the *past* opportunity, or as it is connected with the prospect of *future* ones. I shall wave the *first*, as sufficiently declared in the former part of this discourse, and confine

^b Isai. xl. 31.

confine myself to the *latter* ; of which I would speak more particularly. And here let it be considered,

1. Whilst christians manage in such a manner, as has been recommended, their *habitual* preparedness for the holy solemnity cannot well be call'd in question. Serious minds are often solicted by many *doubts* and *scruples* about those qualifications, which are presupposed to their actual preparation ; whether they are really *born again*, *partakers of a divine nature*, *passed from death to life*, and have the *love of God*, which is the *root of the matter*, dwelling in them. They suspect their sincerity, and question whether they have more than a name to live, and a form of godliness without the power : and as this keeps many from *ever approaching* the holy table ; so it often gives a great deal of *trouble* to such, who dare not allow themselves in the total neglect of a plain duty, and keeps them *many times* away, when they have otherwise no *reasonable* pretence for absenting. Various methods of address have been used with these unhappy persons. The *former* (*viz.* those who absolutely refuse to comply with the command of Christ upon this allegation) I am not now concerned with : but as to the *latter*, I may in general say, that an improper conduct after the solemnity seems to be the source and foundation of their perplexing scruples,
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and uneasy tormenting fears, and the frequent omissions consequent upon them : under a consciousness of not having lived as communicants ought, they are afraid to repeat their attendances ; or, if they force themselves to offer this sacrifice, they do it in a manner very *improper*, and the issue is usually very *uncomfortable*.

But now those, who accustom themselves to recollection and reflection after their participation, in some such manner as has been represented, can hardly fail of growing up into an *habitual assurance* of their interest in the blessings of the gospel-covenant ; and, unless in *extraordinary* cases, will have little doubt of their being *washed*, that is, *sanctified* and *justified*, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God : and this matter being once happily settled, the grand difficulty is over, and the principal stumbling-block removed.

2. Such a conduct will exceedingly facilitate our *actual* preparation. Thoughts of Christ taking rise from the view we had of him at his table, being by daily reflection become familiar to our minds, we shall not need long and laborious application to put ourselves into a fit disposition for the ordinance. What a man is daily, and upon a variety of incidents, thinking of, he will more easily apply himself to in due form upon

upon solemn occasions: as he, who is continually thinking of his friend, and has a desire of pleasing him habitually soliciting his mind, will be ready to visit or receive him without much warning; especially when a sincere love and cordial respect is the main thing expected, and outward pomp or ceremony is of little or no consideration. The preparation of the heart for this sacrament consists in a readiness to act faith, love, repentance, resolution, submission, &c. upon the representations there made of Christ, and particularly his love in dying for us: and if this bear upon our minds in *daily* returns, and the intervals of our thoughts, besides our having recourse to it upon *special* emergencies; how readily may we attend, without having any more to do, than to dismiss our worldly thoughts for that season, and recollect ourselves, so as to attend wholly to the matter before us? Whereas such as, having performed their devotions at the Lord's table, think no more of Christ's dying love, till they have publick warning to prepare for another communion, and, perhaps, don't apply in good earnest to their preparations, till a very near approach of the season, must have a great deal to do with their hearts to get them in order; and may expect to suffer under that hurry and perplexity, which is usual in ordinary affairs, when men have delayed till they

they are straitned in time, and are not in a condition to bear many unavoidable incidents of interruption and avocation.

Many persons, who *have time enough* for their *preparatory* exercises, yet find it very difficult to *manage* to advantage; this may possibly arise in some for want of instruction; but generally is owing to a carnal frame, which makes self-employment in spiritual things uncouth and irksome: but having been accustomed to such meditations, we shall set about the work with proper alacrity and address, and may ordinarily expect to be free from that confusion, perplexity, and insensibility, which attends a mind not used to such employments: as a man, who is accustomed to any particular business, and has his mind upon it in leisure intervals, will be more easily in readiness for it, than one who seldom and with reluctance sets about it. Our *former* sins will be more easily recollected, and proper impressions more freely revive, (besides our being like to have fewer *fresh* ones to create us trouble) we shall more easily adjust the account we have to make up, discern the evidences of our sincerity, and put on all those ornaments which make up the wedding-attire: as garments of *daily use* are more easily found and put on, than a habit which we *seldom* use, and wear only upon necessity or special occasions. In short, he whose whole life is

an improvement of the exhibition of a crucified Jesus, will easily get ready for this part of publick worship, when providence gives opportunity.

§. By this means we shall attend in a more *worthy* or acceptable manner. Such a conduct, as has been recommended, will gradually spiritualize our frame, and consequently make us more fit for the sublimer parts of worship: we shall thus become more ready at the exercise of every grace, which the occasion calls for. *Faith*, as it respects *unseen things* in general, and *the mediator* in particular, will be easily drawn forth by one, who is daily conversing with things above, and has a crucified and glorified Jesus, as it were dwelling in his heart^d: nor will there be so much need of that quickning exhortation, *where is your faith^e?* or that, *how is it that you have no faith^f?* Making allowance for extraordinary occurrences, persons who have *their senses* thus exercised, will be able with great ease to raise their minds up to the throne of God, at whose right hand he sits, *who was dead, and is alive, and lives for evermore*. As he, who looks daily at a distant object, will more easily discover it than a stranger, or one disused to remote prospects: and a steep ascent grows easy by a frequent use: so it is in the exercise of that grace, in which

^d Eph. iii. 17. ^e Luke viii. 25. ^f Mark iv. 40.

which the mind opens to distant prospects, and ascends in divine contemplations. When we are called upon in the solemnity, to do it *in remembrance of him*; how easy will it be to turn the eyes of our mind to an object, which has been daily familiar to us? this is agreeable to *reason* and *true philosophy*, and confirmed by *experience*: for ‘long and constant habits of fixing one thing on the imagination, begets a ready disposition in the nerves to produce again the same image, till the thought of it becomes spontaneous and natural like breathing, or the motion of the heart, which the machine performs without the consent of the will *’. And there is no doubt to be made, but the organs of sensation, and those the mind uses in its intellectual operations, may be likewise improved, strengthened, and perfected by constant use and proper application, as the same author observes †: to which consideration we are taught from *scripture* to add (as a matter of the highest consequence) the promise of God’s grace, and the more plentiful effusions of his spirit, which shall be given to those who improve their talents; *to him that hath, it shall be given*. The same may be said of *repentance*, and *love* in all the expressions of it, and every thing which

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* Dr. Cheyne’s *Essay on Long Life*, p. 156, 157.

† P. 161.

is the proper employment of the sacred hour. If the heart be kept warm by *habitual* applications to its great object, it will be more ready to flame out on *solemn occasions*; in those ardent desires after God, without which all our bodily exercise will be of no advantage to ourselves, and not at all pleasing or acceptable to him, whom we profess to serve. — And can there be a better method to keep it so, than that which I have proposed?

There will be also this advantage arising from what I have offered; that we shall not be so apt to have our mind *distracted* with the *variety of service*, which we are called to at the ordinance. We are there to make various reflections, and express a great diversity of resentments; love to God, hatred of sin, self-loathing, and deep humiliation, hope, joy, submission, resolution, thanksgiving, &c. this *multiplicity* of address is apt to puzzle and confound such, as are unpractised and unaccustomed to spiritual and devotional exercises; they are in danger of having their minds perplexed, their thoughts shattered, and their hearts sunk with fear of not attending duly to every thing, which the case requires. Whereas, in the practice of what I have recommended, we shall find this benefit; that our transitions from one thing to another will be less difficult, and our minds will be more easily con-

conducted from one scene to another, as they shall open to us: or, if any thing be omitted, a consciousness of what has passed in the exercises of recollection will comfort us, and especially a prospect of calling every thing over more particularly in the following opportunities of review.

One thing more may be worthy our consideration; that by the method proposed we are like to be more fit for the *proper* service of the occasion, which is holy *rejoicing* and thanksgiving. The sacrament of the Lord's-supper is a *festival* solemnity; in it we should *serve the Lord with gladness, and come before his presence with singing; enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise; be thankful unto him, and bless his name*^s. Now *this* no man is so well qualified for, as he who retains upon his mind the savour and relish of former sacramental transactions, and has kept up their influence upon his heart and ways, by such stated and occasional recollections as have been recommended. Such are likely to possess the soul in a steady chearfulness and serenity, and have most reason to expect those peculiar elevations and enlargements which God sometimes indulges, not only as a reward of their diligence and spirituality, but as a support under future trials and sore dispensations: however, *their soul will magnify the*

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Lord,

Lord; and their spirit rejoice in God their Saviour^h: and, unless something extraordinary occur, their soul will be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and their mouth praise God with joyful lipsⁱ: when they look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn; even this mourning will be consistent with, yea, friendly to the rejoicing in Christ Jesus. In a word, such persons are likely, in the remembrance of an unseen Jesus, to rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory^k; and may expect to return from the ordinance, with a settled peace and serenity of mind, which will fit them for the duties of their general and particular calling; and to experience what is signified in that expression, *the joy of the Lord is their strength*^l. And then continuing in their usual course of recollecting and improving what has passed at the ordinance, for maintaining and increasing a spiritual frame and a heavenly conversation, they will have abundant evidence that they did not cheat themselves with their own fancies, instead of a sense of God's love; like those who, walking in the vanities and ways of this world, yet boast of their sense of the love of God*.

Thus I have represented the advantages which will arise from the due improvement of one communion, in reference to such as we

^h Luke i. 46, 47. ⁱ Ps. lxxiii. 5. ^k 1 Pet. i. 8.

^l Neh. viii. 10. * Dr. Owen of Temptation, p. 119.

we shall *afterwards* have the opportunity of attending upon. What farther I have to offer in recommendation of the practice, shall be under three heads.

1. By this means we shall not be tempted to think much of *frequent* communion. We are told the *primitive christians* communicated every day; to be sure they did every Lord's day; it was a part of their stated worship. I shall not pretend to find fault with the custom of *protestant* churches; but I hope I may say without offence, that the reason why the *primitive* practice has received so great an alteration, appears to be founded in one of these two things: either *a degree of superstition*, in setting this ordinance in a higher preference to other sacred appointments, than I can find any warrant for in *scripture*; or else *a want of that spiritual-mindedness*, or being in good earnest in matters of religion, which was once the glory of the churches of Christ: and perhaps, a mixture of *both*. However, may I not say, if a right improvement of the communion was made in some such manner as I have been recommending, we should not be so forward in making excuses, when providence offers an opportunity? how often are people's places empty, when they are not hindered by any just occasion? which would not be, if they had maintained that spiritual frame in any good measure, into which

their converse with a *crucified Redeemer* brought them.

We let down our watch, and go off our guard, give our hearts a loose to folly and vanity, or plunge too deep into worldly amusements: this makes it difficult to recollect ourselves, and disposes us to invent reasons for our omission; and one neglect makes way for another, till *at last* 'tis well if we do not wholly estrange ourselves from attendance on Christ at his table. — And the consequence of this is often very tremendous; first a careless life, and then an admission of such principles as may serve to support it; all which would be happily prevented by the method I have been proposing.

2. Another good effect of this conduct would be, that we shall not be so much dejected, if we are *necessarily put by* our usual and stated attendance. Whilst I reprove needless omissions, I own there may be real occasions for absenting ourselves from this ordinance: not only bodily indispositions, travelling in foreign countries, the absence of proper persons to administer it, but some circumstances besides, of which others may not be so proper judges as ourselves: this indeed, when it happens, is an *affliction*, and may be resented as such; but we ought not to spoil the peace of our mind upon this account. The *habitual* spirituality of our frame,

frame, which results from the review of what we have experienced of the presence of God at his table, will be a great means to compose us, and prevent any excess of uneasiness, which might else arise in such a case: let such as are kept from a *fresh* opportunity, recollect what passed at *the last*; and it may, by the blessing of God, answer the same end as their renewed attendance would do. Thus a man may as it were communicate by himself; and, tho' *absent in body, be present in spirit*, with the churches of Christ: and this will be more easy to those, who have accustomed themselves to the review which has been recommended. But always remember, it must be a *real necessity*, and not a *pretence* of our own; otherwise we are guilty of the neglect of a plain duty, and no *succedaneum* or equivalent shall be admitted in its room.

3. This will also afford comfort, if thro' bodily indisposition, or extraordinary accidents, we should *not find ourselves in such a frame as was expected, or has been usual*. They who scarce think of the sacrament, but when the time of the solemnity is just at hand, and then do not find what they proposed, are apt to suffer under the ill effects of their disappointment; either they are *inconsolable*, or, which is worse, grow *indifferent* about the matter. But such as make it their business, in the interval of sacraments,

to recollect and improve the *last*, will have a relief against both these evils; especially in the consciousness of their sincerity, and that their missing of what they aimed at, has not proceeded from a slothful, worldly, or otherwise carnal mind; and so, instead of terrifying themselves with the sad thought of having *eat and drank damnation* to themselves, they will submit to it, as they do to other unavoidable afflictions, and consider it, like them, improveable to the purposes of humility and self-abasement, and trust in the mere mercy of a gracious God, thro' a prevailing Mediator. But then we must see to it, that we do not encourage ourselves in sloth and indifference by that, which was never designed for that end.

Many more advantages arising from the due improvement of, and walking regularly *after* the participation of this great ordinance of our religion, might be represented with ease: but the end I proposed, being answered as far as lies in my power, I shall conclude, and recommend the attempt to the divine benediction.

APPEN-

A P P E N D I X.

*The following prayers are borrowed from the late excellent and reverend Mr. Matthew Henry *.*

I. *A prayer for a particular person, before receiving of the sacrament of the Lord's supper.*

MOST holy, and blessed, and gracious Lord God, with all humility and reverence, I here present myself before thee; to seek thy face, and intreat thy favour, and as an evidence of thy good will towards me, to beg that I may experience thy good work in me.

I acknowledge myself unworthy, utterly unworthy of the honour; unfit, utterly unfit for the service to which I am now called. It is an inestimable privilege, that I am admitted so often to hear from thee in thy word, and to speak to thee in prayer; and yet, as if this had been a small matter, I am now invited into communion with thee at thy holy table, there to celebrate the

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* *V. His Method of Prayer, &c. at the end.*

memorial of my Saviour's death, and to partake by faith of the precious benefits which flow from it. I, who deserve not the crumbs, am called to eat of the children's bread.

O Lord, I thank thee for the institution of this blessed ordinance, this precious legacy and token of love which the Lord Jesus left to his church; that it is preserved to this age; that it is administered in this land; that I am admitted to it, and have now before me an opportunity to partake of it: Lord, grant that I may not receive thy grace here in vain.

O thou, who hast called me to the marriage-supper of the Lamb, give me the wedding-garment; work in me a disposition of soul, and all those pious and devout affections which are suited to the solemnities of this ordinance, and requisite to qualify me for an acceptable and advantageous participation of it. Behold the fire and the wood, all things are now ready; but where is the lamb for the burnt-offering? Lord, provide thyself a lamb, by working in me all that, which thou requirest of me upon this occasion. The preparation of the heart, and the answer of the tongue, are both from thee; Lord, prepare my unprepared heart for communion with thee.

Lord, I confess I have sinned against thee, I have done foolishly, very foolishly,
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for foolishness is bound up in my heart; I have sinned, and have come short of the glory of GOD; I have come short of glorifying thee, and deserve to come short of being glorified with thee. The imagination of my heart is evil continually, and the bias of my corrupt nature is very strong towards the world and the flesh, and the gratifications of sense; but towards GOD, and Christ, and Heaven, I move slowly, and with a great many stops and pauses. Nay, there is in my carnal mind a wretched aversion to divine and spiritual things. I have mispent my time, trifled away my opportunities, have followed after lying vanities, and forsaken my own mercies. GOD be merciful to me a sinner! for how little have I done since I came into the world of the great work, that I was sent into the world about!

Thou hast taken me into covenant with thee, for I am a baptized christian, set apart for thee, and sealed to be thine; thou hast laid me, and I also have laid myself, under all possible obligations to love thee, and serve thee, and live to thee. But I have started aside from thee like a deceitful bow: I have not made good my covenant with thee, nor hath the temper of my mind, and the tenor of my conversation, been agreeable to that holy religion, which I make profession of, to my expectations from

thee, and engagements to thee: I am bent to backslide from the living God; and if I were under the law, I were undone; but I am under grace, a covenant of grace, which leaves room for repentance, and promiseth pardon upon repentance, which invites even backsliding children to return, and promiseth that their backslidings shall be healed. Lord, I take hold of this covenant, seal it to me at thy table. There let me find my heart truly humbled for sin, and sorrowing for it after a godly sort: O that I may there look on him whom I have pierced, and mourn, and be in bitterness for him; that there I may sow in tears, and receive a broken Christ into a broken heart: and there let the blood of Christ, which speaks better things than that of *Abel*, be sprinkled upon my conscience, to purify and pacify that: there let me be assured that thou art reconciled to me, that mine iniquities are pardoned, and that I shall not come into condemnation. There say unto me, Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.

And that I may not come unworthily to this blessed ordinance, I beseech thee, lead me into a more intimate and experimental acquaintance with Jesus Christ, and him crucified; with Jesus Christ, and him glorified; that knowing him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, and being by his grace planted
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in the likeness of both, I may both discern the Lord's body, and shew forth the Lord's death.

Lord, I desire by a true and lively faith to close with Jesus Christ, and consent to him as my Lord, and my God, I here give up myself to him as my prophet, priest and king, to be ruled, and taught, and saved by him; this is my beloved, and this is my friend. None but Christ, none but Christ. Lord, increase this faith in me, perfect what is lacking in it; and enable me, in receiving the bread and wine at thy table by a lively faith, to receive Christ Jesus the Lord. O let the great gospel doctrine of Christ's dying to save sinners, which is represented in that ordinance, be meat and drink to my soul, meat indeed and drink indeed: let it be both nourishing and refreshing to me, let it be both my strength and my song, and be the spring both of my holiness and of my comfort. And let such deep impressions be made upon my soul, by the actual commemoration of it, as may abide always upon me, and have a powerful influence upon me in my whole conversation, that the life I now live in the flesh I may live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Lord, I beseech thee fix my thoughts; let my heart be engaged to approach unto thee,

thee, that I may attend upon thee without distraction. Draw out my desires towards thee; give me to hunger and thirst after righteousness, that I may be filled; and to draw near to thee with a true heart, and in full assurance of faith; and since I am not straitened in thee, O let me not be straitened in my own bosom.

Draw me, Lord, and I will run after thee: O send out thy light and thy truth, let them lead and guide me; pour thy Spirit upon me, put thy Spirit within me, to work in me both to will and to do that which is good; and leave me not to myself. Awake, O north wind, and come thou south, and blow upon my garden; come, O blessed Spirit of grace, and enlighten my mind with the knowledge of Christ, bow my will to the will of Christ, fill my heart with the love of Christ, and confirm my resolutions to live and die with him.

Work in me (I pray thee) a principle of holy love and charity towards all men, that I may forgive my enemies, (which by thy grace I heartily do) and may keep up a spiritual communion in faith, hope, and holy love, with all that in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Lord, bless them all, and particularly that congregation with which I am to join in this solemn ordinance. Good Lord, pardon every one that engageth his heart to
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seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, tho' not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary. Hear my prayers, and heal the people.

Lord, meet me with a blessing, a Father's blessing at thy table; grace thine own institutions with thy presence; and fulfil in me all the good pleasure of thy goodness, and the work of faith with power, for the sake of Jesus Christ my blessed Saviour and Redeemer; to him, with the Father, and the Eternal Spirit, be everlasting praises. *Amen.*

II. *A prayer, after receiving of the Lord's-supper.*

O Lord, my God and my Father in Jesus Christ, I can never sufficiently admire the condescension of thy grace to me; what is man that thou dost thus magnify him, and the son of man that thou visitest him! Who am I? And what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto; hast brought me into thy banqueting-house, and thy banner over me hath been love? I have reason to say, that a day in thy courts, an hour at thy table, is better, far better, than a thousand days, than ten thousand hours elsewhere; it is good for me to draw near to God. Blessed be God for the privileges of his house, and those comforts

comforts with which he makes his people joyful in his house of prayer.

But I have reason to blush and be ashamed of myself, that I have not been more affected with the great things, which have been set before me, and offered to me at the Lord's table. O what a vain, foolish, trifling heart have I! when I would do good, even then evil is present with me; good Lord, be merciful to me, and pardon the iniquity of my holy things, and let not my manifold defects in my attendance upon thee be laid to my charge, or hinder my profiting by the ordinance.

I have now been commemorating the death of Christ: Lord, grant that, by the power of that, sin may be crucified in me, the world crucified to me, and I to the world; and enable me so to bear about with me continually the dying of the Lord Jesus, as that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in my mortal body.

I have now been receiving the precious benefits, which flow from Christ's death: Lord, grant that I may never lose, may never forfeit those benefits; but, as I have received Christ Jesus the Lord, give me grace so to walk in him, and to live as one that am not my own, but am bought with a price, glorifying God with my body and spirit, which are his.

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I have now been renewing my covenant with thee, and engaging myself afresh to thee to be thine; now, Lord, give me grace to perform my vow. Keep it always in the imagination of the thought of my heart, and establish my way before thee: Lord, preserve me by thy grace, that I may never return again to folly: after God hath spoken peace, may I never, by my loose and careless walking, undo what I have been doing to-day: but, having my heart enlarged with the consolations of God, give me to run the way of thy commandments with chearfulness and constancy, and still to hold fast my integrity.

This precious soul of mine, which is the work of thine own hands, and the purchase of thy Son's blood, I commit unto thy hands, to be sanctified by thy Spirit and grace, and wrought up into a conformity to thy holy will in every thing: Lord, set up thy throne in my heart, write thy law there, shed abroad thy love there, and bring every thought within me into obedience to thee, to the commanding power of thy law, and the constraining power of thy love. Keep through thine own name that which I commit unto thee, keep it against that day when it shall be called for; let me be preserved blameless to the coming of thy glory, that I may then be presented faultless with exceeding joy.

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All my outward affairs I submit to the disposal of thy wise and gracious Providence; Lord, save my soul, and then, as to other things, do what thou pleasest with me; only make all Providences to work together for my spiritual and eternal advantage. Let all things be pure to me, and give me to taste covenant-love in common mercies; and by thy grace, let me be taught both how to want, and how to abound, how to enjoy prosperity, and how to bear adversity, as becomes a christian; and at all times let thy grace be sufficient for me, and mighty in me, to work in me both to will and to do that which is good of thine own good pleasure.

And that in every thing I may do my duty, and stand compleat in it, let my heart be enlarged in love to Jesus Christ, and affected with the height and depth, the length and breadth of that love of his to me, which passeth all conception and expression.

And as an evidence of that love, let my mouth be filled with his praises: worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive blessing and honour, and glory and power; for he was slain, and hath redeemed a chosen remnant unto God by his blood, and made them to him kings and priests. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and let all that is within me bless his holy name, who forgiveth all mine

mine iniquities, and healeth all my diseases;
 who redeemeth my life from destruction,
 and crowneth me with loving-kindness and
 tender mercy; who having begun a good
 work, will perform it unto the day of Christ.
 As long as I live I will bless the Lord, I
 will praise my God while I have any being;
 and when I have no being on earth, I hope
 to have a being in heaven, to be doing it
 better. O let me be borne up in everlasting
 arms, and carried from strength to strength,
 till I appear before God in *Zion*; for Jesus
 sake, who died for me, and rose again, in
 whom I desire to be found living and dying.
 Now to God the Father, Son, and Spirit,
 be ascribed kingdom, power and glory,
 henceforth and for ever. *Amen.*

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